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BIRDS

AND THEIR WAYS.

BY

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AUTHOR OF "THE WILDFORDS IN INDIA," "THE HOME-NEEDLE,"
"HOW TO FURNISH A HOME," ETC.

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BIRDS AND THEIR WAYS.

CHAPTER I.

*SOME LITTLE PEOPLE, AND A LITTLE TALK
ABOUT ROBIN REDBREASTS.*

THE holidays were over at Elmridge—over and done with for that year—and lessons had again begun in earnest.

Miss Harson's little flock were getting on famously. Their father declared that they improved every day. They learned so much, he said, when they were not seeming to learn—things which came to them in such a pleasant way that the children did not suspect them of being studies; and this was one reason why Mr. Kyle so much liked Miss Harson as a teacher.

But who was Miss Harson? And who was Mr. Kyle? And who were "the children"?

Just some of the nicest people you ever saw. They lived in a beautiful country home that was called "Elmridge" because there were a number of fine elm trees around it, and also because it was built on a ridge or rising piece of ground. Mr. Kyle was a very kind father to his three motherless children, but he did not see a great deal of them, for he was away nearly all day at his business in the city. Miss Harson, the young lady whom he had engaged as their governess, really knew more about them than he did. There were Malcolm, Clara and Edith, and their ages were ten, eight and six years. They were very lovable children, if Malcolm was a little mischievous. They seemed to Miss Harson almost like her own little brother and sisters. Their schoolroom was a particularly pleasant one, with a bright fire, crimson curtains and cushioned window-seats. They loved to sit there after school-hours and have what they called "talks" with their teacher, who always contrived to render these talks interesting. Generally they were about things out of doors—trees and



THE ENGLISH ROBIN.

flowers and animals and birds and stars,
and many things which some people see all
their lives and yet know very little about.

But Miss Harson taught her pupils to use their eyes and ears, and their tongues too, to some purpose. Sometimes an imaginary journey would be proposed, and then they all traveled to some foreign country to learn about things that lived or grew there ; and this the children always enjoyed very much.

"Who would like to take a trip to Europe with me this evening?" asked Miss Harson as her three pupils sat looking at her in the glow of the winter firelight.

"What a funny time to go to Europe!" laughed Clara, with the dimples deepening in her rosy cheeks. "But I know what you are going for, Miss Harson."

"*My* trunk is packed," said Malcolm, with a satisfied air.

"Me too!" chimed in little Edith, who was not quite sure what it was all about ; but if there was anything going on, she wanted to be in it.

The reason for this particular journey happened to be that Mr. Kyle had lately received from a friend in England a case of very handsome stuffed birds, most of

them strangers in this country, and the children were very much interested in them and anxious to learn all that they could of their ways and their habits. Miss Harson had kindly promised to give them some "talks" on these very birds, and now they were to begin.

"We will go first to England," said Miss Harson, "and look up our feathered acquaintances there; but before we return, we shall probably take a peep into Asia and Africa."

"I want to hear about ostriches," said Malcolm.

"With monkeys on their backs," added Edith, who had seen a performance like this at the hippodrome and thought that it was the way in which monkeys and ostriches usually traveled.

"The poor little monkeys looked so frightened!" said Clara, sympathizingly. "Do the ostriches run away with them?"

Miss Harson was quite amused at this idea; and she explained to the children that the monkeys and ostriches they had seen were trained for such rides, and that

each would much have preferred traveling separately.

"But we are yet a long way off from ostriches," she added, "and these long-legged gentlemen must wait for their turn. And now what English bird shall we take first?"

"I like the little robin redbreasts that go hopping about in winter," said Clara, "and so does Edie. Please tell us about them, Miss Harson."

"Yes," was the reply; "we will take the English robin, who is in many ways a very different bird from our robin. He is smaller—for he is not quite six inches long—and his color is brighter. He is a winter-bird, too, hopping around all through the cold weather; and he is very tame and affectionate. Robins are often seen in English pictures of Christmas with snow on the ground, as at that season they are very busy looking for crumbs.

"The robin redbreast is a great home-body, you see, and not at all a traveler, like *our* bird; he is very fond of people, and people, in return, are very fond of him. He goes to houses in very cold weather,

even tapping at the window with his bill, as if asking to be let in ; and no one ever refuses admittance to the little visitor. 'It repays the favor by the most amiable familiarity, gathering the crumbs from the table, distinguishing affectionately the people of the house, and assuming a warble—not, indeed, so rich as that of spring, but more delicate. This it retains through all the rigors of the season, to hail each day the kindness of its host and the sweetness of its retreat.' ”

The children thought this delightful ; and Malcolm asked, rather discontentedly,

“Why can't *our* robins do such nice things ? There would be some sense in them then.”

“No,” said Miss Harson, smiling ; “ours show their sense by *not* doing these things, for they would certainly freeze to death in this cold climate. You must remember that the winters are milder in England than here. This English robin has a great many pretty ways, and he often acts more like a dog than like a bird.

“A story is told of a robin belonging to

a gardener which all but speaks in return for several years of kind treatment from its master. This bird, when called upon, will fly from the farthest part of the garden at which it can hear his voice, alight upon his hand, and at once and without any apprehension pick its meat, and then will often sit on his shoulder as he works or walks, and nestle in his bosom in assured security. Nay, more, when the gardener comes to town, if the robin, by any chance, espies him as he departs, it gives him an escort, chirping and fluttering along the hedge before him till he reaches the toll-bar at Alloway Place, on which, or on a tree near it, robin perches himself till his master returns. He attends his master when he goes to church, and waits at his station till both forenoon and afternoon services are over. He is equally polite on market-days, when, as soon as he sees him coming, he flies to meet him, and, fluttering before him, beckons him homeward all the way."

The children were now quite anxious to take a real voyage to England to see such a remarkable little bird.

“The redbreast,” continued their govern-ess, “is often found inside of churches just because he likes to be there. Jackdaws are found in the towers, but they gather for safety, and owls in the belfry, because that is a good place for hiding; while other birds sometimes get in and stay a while because they cannot find their way out. ‘But to the redbreast the church is a home; he perches on the columns, roosts on the pillars and pipes with the organ. He knows his way out, but is content to stay. Would he do so if the church were shut up and deserted? I think not. To the owl and the jackdaw their place of resort would be all the more attractive from the absence of their common enemy, but to robin the solitude would be distasteful owing to the departure of his friends.’

“I remember telling you of a robin who was seen in a church for several years, and who joined its notes to the tones of the organ and the voices of the congregation, as though it too were singing praises to God. After a time the bird disappeared, to the great regret of those who had listened to

its warble from its favorite perch on the top of the organ. Then," said Miss Harson, hesitating, as she saw tears coming into the eyes of the two little girls, "it was found to have died."

"Yes," added Clara, sorrowfully; "its poor little skeleton was found, you know, in one of the pipes of the organ."

"Well," said Malcolm, sturdily, "I'm not going to cry twice over that same old robin; besides, he was dead and gone long ago.—Can't we have something lively now, Miss Harson? Suppose we take larks next?"

Miss Harson replied:

"Larks it shall be, Malcolm; and, although enough has been written and said about robin redbreast to fill a very large book, we must leave him and his lovable little ways in order to make the acquaintance of other English birds."

CHAPTER II.

A SWEET SINGER: THE SKYLARK.

“THE skylark is a very popular bird,” began Miss Harson, “chiefly owing to its sweet notes and its power of rising and singing whilst at a great height in the air. Its warble is heard when the singer is quite out of sight; and this is the meaning of the beautiful line :

“ ‘ Hark ! the lark at heaven’s gate sings.’ ”

“The English lark is a little larger than the robin redbreast, and, like most singing-birds, it is very plainly dressed, the prevailing color being brown, with white on the neck and breast, mixed with a little yellow and red. It spends much of its time on the ground, where it sometimes sings, and its nest is always built there. It eats small insects and seeds; but it is very fond, too,

of grain that has just sprouted, and for this reason the farmers regard it as an enemy and hire boys to frighten it away from their fields with a curious kind of rattle. Larks are caught in various ways—sometimes to be caged, for they will sing with as much spirit in captivity as when free, and sometimes, alas! to be roasted or made into pies.”

“What a shame,” exclaimed Malcolm, “to cook singing-birds!”

“It does indeed seem so,” replied Miss Harson; “but it may comfort you, Malcolm, to know that larks are not at all easy to catch. An old English proverb says, ‘When the sky falls, we shall catch larks,’ meaning that these birds mount up so high above the clouds that the sky itself must fall before they can be taken. And here,” continued the governess, “is something beautiful about the soaring of the lark to which I want my children to listen attentively. It was written more than two hundred years ago by a good and learned man—Bishop Jeremy Taylor:

“‘I have seen a lark rising from his bed

of grass and soaring upward, singing as he rises, and in hopes to get to heaven and climb above the clouds; but the poor bird



THE SKYLARK.

was beaten back with the loud sighing of an eastern wind, and his motion made irregular and inconstant, descending more at every breath of the tempest than all the vi-

brations of his wings served to exalt him, till the little creature was forced to sit down and pant, and stay till the storm was overpast; and then it made a prosperous flight, for then it did rise and sing, as if it had learned music and motion from some angel as he passed some time through the air.

“So is the prayer of a good man when agitated by any passion. He fain would speak to God, but his words are of this earth, earthy; he would look to his Maker, but he could not help seeing also that which distracted him, and a tempest was raised and the man overruled; his prayer was broken, and his thoughts were troubled, and his words ascended to the clouds, and the wandering of his imagination recalled them; and in all the fluctuating varieties of passion they are never like to reach to God at all. But he sits him down and sighs over his infirmity and fixes his thoughts upon things above, and forgets all the little vain passages of this life, and his spirit is becalmed and his soul is even and still; and then it softly and sweetly ascends to heaven on the wings of the Holy Dove and dwells

with God till it returns, like the useful bee, loaden with a blessing and the dew of heaven.' ”

The children were much taken with the quaint language used by the good old bishop, and declared that it sounded like *Pilgrim's Progress*. Miss Harson promised that when they were older and could understand it better she would read to them, on Sunday evenings, a great deal more that he had written.

“Where do the larks live in winter?” asked little Edith. “They don't stay in the sky then, do they?”

“Oh no,” replied her governess; “the poor little birds would freeze. They have far pleasanter quarters in cold weather. Rain and high winds they particularly dislike; and when such weather prevails in winter, they leave their summer dwelling-place and travel southward in large flocks. It is a singular fact that they never perch on trees, but one or two will sometimes settle on a hedge or railing. November is the time for catching them for the table, as they are then fat and in good condition.”

"But how can people shoot them," asked Malcolm, "if they fly so high?"

"They are not shot," continued Miss Harson, "but are taken in traps and nets. At that season of the year they spend much of their time on the ground searching for food, and are more easily caught. A lark-trap is sometimes made by placing a looking-glass on the ground near some food and then throwing a net over the birds as they stand staring at their own reflections. For, strange to say, all feathered creatures have an immense amount of curiosity; and when anything strikes them as being out of the common way, they wish to know the reason why quite as much as do some little human creatures with whom I am acquainted."

The children laughed as Miss Harson looked at them with a smile, and it seemed funny enough to imagine little birds looking at themselves in a mirror.

"I wonder if they think they are pretty?" queried Clara.

"However that may be, they probably look upon larger creatures as very ugly

monsters," replied the governess. "It has been very prettily said that

" 'The Lark sang, "Give us glory," and the Dove sang, "Give us peace."'

Here is a good description of this bird's style of singing :

" 'Rising as it were by a sudden impulse from its nest or lowly retreat, it bursts forth, while as yet but a few feet from the ground, into exuberant song ; and with its head turned toward the breeze, now ascending perpendicularly, and now veering to the right or left, but not describing circles, it pours forth an unbroken chain of melody until it has reached an elevation computed to be at the most about a thousand feet. To an observer on earth, the lark has dwindled to the size of a mere speck ; but, as far as my experience goes, it never rises so high as to defy the search of a keen eye. Having reached its highest elevation, it begins to descend (its ambition being satisfied without making any permanent stay), not with a uniform downward motion, but by a series of droppings

with intervals of simple hovering, during which it seems to be resting on its wings. Finally, as it draws near the earth, it ceases its song and descends more rapidly; but before it touches the ground it recovers itself, sweeps away with almost horizontal flight for a short distance, and disappears in the herbage.'"

"I wish we had skylarks here," said Clara, wistfully; "I should like so much to watch them. Where do they build their nests, Miss Harson?"

"A lark's nest doesn't amount to much," answered Miss Harson; "it is built on the ground, in a hole which the bird has scraped out, and sometimes in the rut of a cart-wheel or the hollow made by a horse's hoof. It is not particular in this matter; and when some dry grass has been put in and lined with something finer, Mrs. Lark is quite ready to begin housekeeping. She lays four or five eggs, and has two broods of young in a year. Both parents take very tender care of their little ones; and when a nest built in the grass is disturbed by mowers, a dome is made over it for pro-

tection, and the mother-bird has even been seen to lift the little birdies in her claws and carry them off to a place of greater safety."

"Just like my old kitty," exclaimed Edith; "only she takes the baby-kitties in her mouth."

"During the summer, after the young ones have been hatched, larks are quite unsocial; nests are very seldom found near one another, although two or three pairs of birds may be living in the same field. This is not because they quarrel, for they are peaceably disposed, but only that they seem to prefer the privacy of the family circle. Even the young larks do not keep together after they leave the nest, but go their several ways over the field in the most unsocial manner, keeping their parents constantly busy carrying 'meals for one' to all the various haunts. But when able to take care of themselves, they flock together in great numbers and are caught by the wholesale.

"Here is something, Malcolm," added his governess, with a smile, "that reminds

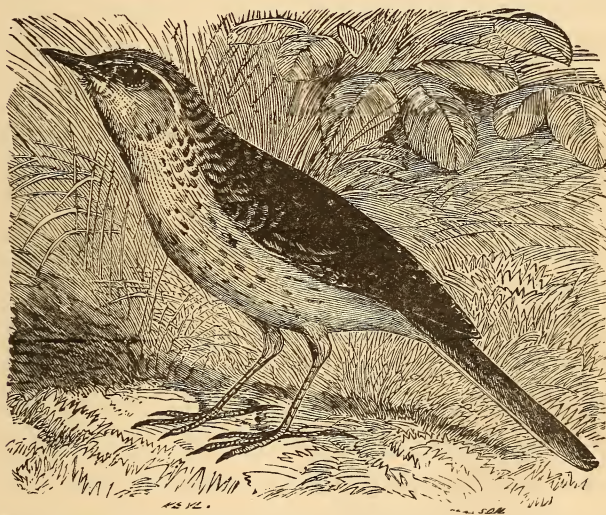
me of your last summer's experience with the humming-bird :

“ ‘Larks frequently become the prey of the hawk and merlin, which pounce on them as they are on the point of leaving the ground and bear them off with as much ease as they would a feather. But if an intended victim discovers its oppressor in time, it instantly begins to ascend with a rapidity which the other cannot follow, carried on as it is by the impetus of its horizontal flight. The hawk, foiled for this time, renews the chase and endeavors to soar above its quarry. If it succeeds, it makes a second swoop, sometimes with deadly effect ; but if it fails a second time, the lark folds its wings, drops like lead to the ground, and, crouching among the herbage, often escapes detection.’ ”

“I'm glad of it,” said Malcolm, laughing ; “but how mad should I be if I were the hawk !”

“Besides the skylark,” continued Miss Harson, “there are the woodlark, the crested lark, the shore-lark and the short-toed lark ; and these all sing very sweetly, but

they are more or less rare, though the last variety is often found in France. In our own continent there is a species of the skylark called the 'shore-lark.' It lives in the northern part of the United States,



THE AMERICAN "MEADOW-LARK" (PROPERLY A STURNELLA, OR STARLING).

Canada and Labrador. Our 'meadow-lark'—of which here is a picture—is not a lark, but a starling, a cousin of the English starling, about which we shall have a talk some of these days." *

* See Chapter XII.

"Miss Harson," asked Edith, "don't you know any story about a lark?"

"Yes, pet," was the reply; and the little one was lifted to her favorite seat on the governess's lap. "I think I do know a *little* story that I read lately about a skylark that preached a sermon. I will excuse either of you if you do not like stories."

For answer, Malcolm and Clara laughed and nestled closer; and Miss Harson began:

"It was in Australia, where many people have gone from England to the gold-mines; and a mining-camp is a rough place, where men think little of God or of anything but making as much money as possible to carry home with them. Every one grows careless, and Sunday is almost forgotten. There are no feathered songsters in Australia; the birds there have beautiful plumage, but they do not sing. So, when the man who kept a store at the mine had a lark sent to him in a cage from England, he hung it outside of his door; and the men, surprised and delighted, would stop as they passed, for the little fellow sang on,

not minding his cage a bit, and his song was as loud and clear beneath the roof of his little house as though there had been nothing over his head but the high vault of heaven. How they listened, those hard-working men! It seemed like a piece of home that went straight to their hearts; and many a tear was quietly wiped away at the thought of other and better days. When Sunday came one said to another, 'Let's go and hear the parson preach,' meaning the skylark; for they declared he talked to them just like the parson at home, and made them feel ashamed of themselves; and they actually washed and dressed themselves decently, as though they had been going to church, and went by ones and twos and threes 'to hear the parson.'

"How he preached to them! He must have had a 'fourteenthly' in his sermon, for he kept at it for two hours with scarcely a pause; and the congregation sat around on the grass with their chins resting on their hands and their eyes upturned to Dominie Lark, while before the eyes of their minds were passing sweet English

pictures of country homes and green fields, and they heard the voices of children at play or went up to the house of God as they had done in those old days. The lark preached and the men listened; and when, from sheer exhaustion, he finally ceased, they went their ways quite thoughtfully. Some of them even brought out long-unused Bibles and sat down once more to the study of God's word."

"And were they good men?" asked Clara; "and did they go to church again?"

"They could not go to church at the mine, dear," replied Miss Harson, "because there was no church there; but I do not believe they forgot the sermon that the lark had preached, and the bird may have been God's little messenger to make them think.—Do you know, Malcolm," she added, "of any habit that you and the lark have in common?"

Malcolm fidgeted and looked embarrassed. She must mean about his getting up in the morning, for it was a very hard job to get him out of bed; and Kitty, his old

nurse, declared that "it took six horses to do it," though no one had ever heard of *one* being called in for that purpose. So, when Miss Harson put this home-question, he scarcely knew what to say.

"Don't they get up very early?" he asked, rather sheepishly.

He was obliged to laugh outright when his governess, with her hand on his shoulder, inquired if *that* was the point in which he and they resembled each other.

"'Rising with the lark' has been a favorite saying," she added, "but it will have to be discontinued; for I have just read that larks do not rise early at all, but lie snugly under their grass coverlets until several other birds are up and at the business of the day. So you may turn out a lark, after all, Malcolm."

The subject of the lark seemed to have become quite finished, but Miss Harson opened another book, that did not look at all like a bird-book, and said,

"A great many poets have written about the lark—almost as much, indeed, as about the nightingale; but I think these verses

by Wordsworth, who was well acquainted with the bird in his own home, will please you better than any :

“ ‘ Ethereal minstrel ! pilgrim of the sky !

Dost thou despise the earth, where cares abound ?

Or, while thy wings aspire, are heart and eye

Both with thy nest upon the dewy ground—

Thy nest, which thou canst drop into at will,

Those quivering wings composed, that music still ?

“ ‘ To the last point of vision, and beyond,

Mount, daring warbler ! That love-prompted strain

(’Twixt thee and thine a never-failing bond)

Thrills not the less the bosom of the plain !

Yet mightst thou seem—proud privilege !—to sing

All-independent of the leafy spring.

“ ‘ Leave to the nightingale the shady wood :

A privacy of glorious light is thine,

Whence thou dost pour upon the world a flood

Of harmony with rapture more divine,

Type of the wise, who soar, but never roam,

True to the kindred points of heaven and home.’ ”

CHAPTER III.

A GREAT TALKER: THE MAGPIE.

“‘**Y**OU chatter like a magpie,’” read Clara from one of her story-books. —“Do magpies really talk, Miss Harson?”

“We will find that out this evening, dear,” replied her governess, smiling; for she was just finishing a letter that was of far more consequence than magpies.

Clara read on contentedly, for she knew that Miss Harson never failed to redeem her promises; and, fortunately for their young teacher as well as for themselves, the little Kyles were not impatient children.

After tea Miss Harson said quite comically,

“At Clara’s request, we are to have a dish of magpies this evening, if no one objects to the feast.—What say you, Malcolm?”

Malcolm was anything but unwilling; there was some fun, he said, in magpies, and he hoped that Miss Harson would give them plenty of nice stories; while little Edith asked if magpies were ever wicked enough to swear like Captain James's parrot.

"I am afraid they are," was the reply, "as, like the parrots, they will imitate what they hear; but, as they cannot distinguish good from evil, it is not the poor birds' fault. Here is a very good picture of a magpie," continued Miss Harson, "and you will see that the most remarkable thing about it is its long tail."

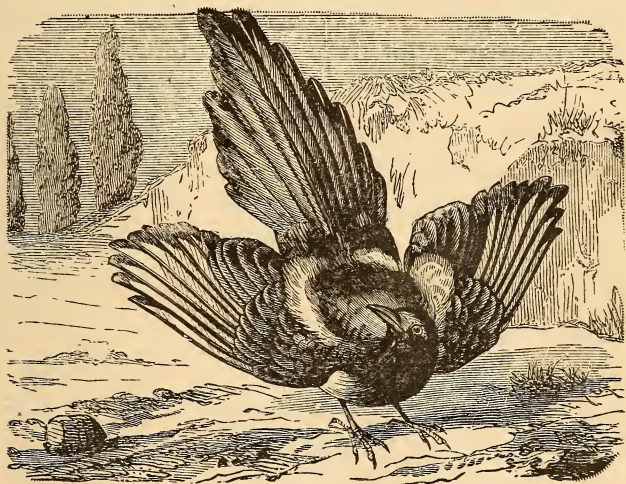
It was a very handsomely-colored plate, and gave the little ornithologists a very clear idea of this interesting bird.

"Why, it's no larger than a pigeon," exclaimed Malcolm, in surprise; "I thought a magpie was bigger."

"No," replied his governess; "it is only about the size of a pigeon, and its long tail and short wings give it an awkward appearance and prevent it from flying with much speed. It is a handsome bird, though, with

its black-velvet back and blue and bronze flashes in the tail and wings, with white underneath. It looks plump and pretty as it grasps that bough, and it has quite an innocent expression; but, unfortunately, innocence and magpies do not go together. Here is rather a bad character for a bird:

“Any one who has had an opportunity



THE ENGLISH MAGPIE (*Pica caudata*).

of watching the habits of a tame magpie must have observed its extreme inquisitiveness and skill in discovering what was intended to be concealed, joined, moreover,

to an unscrupulous habit of purloining everything that takes its roving fancy. Even when surrounded by plenty and pampered with delicacies, it prefers a stolen morsel to what is legally its own. Little wonder, then, that when it has to hunt on its own account for the necessities of life, and is stimulated by the cravings of its hungry brood, it has gained an unenviable notoriety as a prowling bandit.

“‘In the harrying of birds’ nests no schoolboy can compete with it. Partridges and pheasants are watched to their retreat and plundered mercilessly of their eggs and their young ; the smaller birds are treated in like manner ; hares and rabbits, if they suffer themselves to be surprised, have their eyes picked out and are torn to pieces ; rats, mice and frogs are a lawful prey ; carrion, offal of all kinds, snails, worms, grubs and caterpillars, each in turn, pleasantly vary the diet ; and when in season, grain and fruit are attacked with as much audacity as is consistent with safety, and might, whenever available, gives a right to stray chickens and ducklings.

“The young birds, nurtured in an impregnable stronghold and familiarized from their earliest days with plunder, having no song to learn save the note of caution and alarm when danger is near, soon become adepts in the arts of their parents, and before their first moult are a set of inquisitive, chattering marauders, wise enough to keep near the haunts of men because food is there most abundant, cautious never to come within reach of the fowling-piece, and cunning enough to carry off the call-bird from the net without falling themselves into the snare. Even in captivity, with all their drollery, they are unamiable.’”

“What disagreeable birds!” said Clara, with a look of disgust. “I think they are a great deal worse than parrots.”

“I don’t see why people want to make pets of them,” observed Malcolm.

“Some people have made pets even of snakes,” said Miss Harson; “but tame magpies are very amusing, though most troublesomely mischievous. The magpie is found all over Europe and in some parts of Asia, and the German magpie is very

easily tamed. In Sweden and Norway these birds build their nests in bushes close to the cottage-doors, and no one ever disturbs them. Magpies are so generally persecuted on account of their evil traits that travelers have spoken with surprise of the confidence and fearlessness which they display in Norway. 'He will only just move out of your horse's way,' writes one, 'as you drive by him on the road ; and should he be perched on a rail by the roadside, he will only stare at you as you rattle by, but never think of moving off.'

"It is added, however, that, as to magpies, there is a superstition with regard to them throughout Norway: they are considered harbingers of good luck, and are consequently always invited to preside over the house; and when they have taken up their abode in the nearest tree, they are defended from all ill. The mischievous Norse boy or man who maltreats the magpie has perhaps driven off the home-spirit, and so may expect the furious anger of the neighboring dwelling, whose good fortune he has thus violently dispersed. The peo-

ple in many rural districts of England also are still quite superstitious about the magpie, and consider it very unlucky to kill one.

“A magpie’s nest is a very strange affair. The thorny branches of which it is made bristle like bayonets to keep out intruders, and are so rough and strong and so firmly entwined with the tree that it is almost an impossibility to get at the young. A description of the magpie’s nest says :

“‘ This is composed of an outwork of thorns and briers supporting a mass of twigs and mud, which is succeeded by a layer of fibrous roots. The whole is not only fenced around, but arched over, with thorny sticks, an aperture being left, on one side only, large enough to admit the bird. In this stronghold are deposited, generally, six eggs, which in due time are succeeded by as many young ogres, who are to be reared to birds by an unstinted supply of the most generous diet.’

“The highest trees or those most difficult to get at are chosen for these nests ; but when trees are not easily to be had, the

magpie will prefer a gooseberry-bush to a rock. In a barren part of Scotland a pair of magpies built their nest and brought up their families in a gooseberry-bush for several years. The materials in the inside of the nest were soft, warm and comfortable to the touch, but in order that foxes, cats, hawks and other enemies might be kept at a proper distance they had barricaded not only the nest, but the bush itself, all round with briars and thorns in a formidable manner. The young ones in this gooseberry-bush home were brought up on the fat of the land, which in their case meant frogs, mice, worms and such-like delicacies. One day one of the old birds decided on a rat-dinner, but the animal attacked was quite large and refused to be easily killed. A young magpie sallied out of the nest to help its parent, and finally the father, arriving with a fine fat mouse for the larder, lent his aid, and the rat was despatched. On another day the mother-magpie, who was disposed to be very thievish and ungrateful—for the children had often frightened cats and hawks from her nest—pounced

upon a chicken and flew to the low roof of the house to eat it; but the hen would not put up with this, and, rushing after the robber, she soon brought back her frightened offspring in her beak, the poor little chicken being now perfectly quiet, though it had made a great noise when the magpie carried it up.

“These birds are wonderfully inquisitive, and anything out of the common way immediately attracts their attention. Bright objects are particularly attractive to them, and a looking-glass excites their greatest wonder and astonishment. Some one speaks of seeing a looking-glass placed on the ground where two magpies were hopping about. One of them came up to it and stared at it in apparent wonder, hopped off to the other, and then both returned and spent at least ten minutes in nodding, chattering and hopping about the glass.”

“How funny they must have looked!” exclaimed Malcolm, in delight.

“They are inexpressibly funny,” said Miss Harson, “and I always think, in reading about them, how I should enjoy watching

their antics. But some of their funny ways are not altogether agreeable; as when a tame magpie that a lady was accustomed to feed flew up to her one morning with something in its bill and gratefully dropped a fat green worm in her mouth."

"Ugh!" exclaimed the little girls, shuddering; while Malcolm laughed at their horror and disgust.

"Green worms are not so bad," said he, with a superior air. "If you were birds, you would think them very nice."

"But we are not birds," replied Clara, quite seriously; and Miss Harson said that this quite ended the subject.

"Do all magpies talk?" asked Malcolm.

"No," replied his governess; "they all *chatter* and are very noisy; and the description,

" 'From bough to bough the restless magpie roves,
And chatters as she flies,'

is a very true one. But they have to be taught to articulate words, and their value depends upon their success in doing this. We are told that a magpie imitates all

striking sounds, and learns to speak with even less difficulty than the various descriptions of crows. It must, however, be taken out of the nest when quite young and systematically instructed. Plutarch mentions one in the possession of a barber at Rome which of its own accord imitated not only the human voice, but also the cries of various animals and the sound of instruments, and was a general subject of conversation throughout the quarter of the city in which its owner lived.

"A magpie can be taught to come and go when it is called; it will appear at the dining-room window at meal-times and eat whatever is offered it from the table. Worms and insects are reserved as dainties, and five or six magpies are sometimes seen perched on a wall, 'every now and then eagerly darting at the butterflies as they come near, and, after making a short and elegant circular sweep, alighting on the wall again, and there feeding on their prey.'"

"What a shame for them to eat the pretty butterflies!" exclaimed Edith.

"Don't you know," said Malcolm, quick-

ly, "that butterflies lay the eggs out of which caterpillars come? So the magpies are useful in that."

"What would you think," said Miss Harrison, "to see a magpie alight with the greatest composure on the back of a sheep and help itself to some wool for its nest? It has been seen to do this, and also to supply itself with hair from the backs of cattle."

"Rather a cool bird, that," observed Malcolm. "I shouldn't like to be the sheep or the cattle."

"A magpie always appears to think," continued the governess, "that anything it wants it was intended to possess, no matter at what inconvenience to the present owner; which may be excused in a bird, though not in a boy."

"I am glad there are no magpies here," said Clara; "perhaps they would want *our* hair for their nests."

"That would be worse than bats, wouldn't it?" asked her brother, mischievously. "Because bats don't really carry it off, you know, only tangle themselves up in it."

Clara blushed vividly and looked very

uncomfortable; for to her summer evenings were largely made up of bats, and she was quite sure that they visited houses for the one purpose of entangling themselves in people's hair. Miss Harson assured the little girl that she had never heard of any such experience with a bat, but Clara was not to be comforted when one of these strange winged creatures was in sight.

"To return to our magpies," said Miss Harson: "they are such thieves themselves that they naturally suspect every other living creature of being dishonest, and it is thought to be for this reason that, while they keep up such an incessant and loud chattering at other times, they fairly whisper over their work while building their nests, for fear that any one should know where to find them. As they plunder and pillage the nests of other birds of their eggs and their young, they take every precaution that they shall not be treated in the same way. 'Gibraltar,' says a naturalist, 'with its high and fortified rocks, is not more proof against assailing foes than is this thorn-defended structure against ma-

rauders. The wicked schoolboy has often repented the securing of a magpie's nest while bearing on his hands for many a day the marks of his achievement.'

"To study the habits of birds is very interesting, and one who has closely watched magpies and other feathered creatures speaks of their huddling themselves together in considerable numbers during the night in order to keep each other warm. Somebody once saw a party of these birds (probably a family with their parents) sitting so closely together on a tree in a fir-plantation that they all seemed to be rolled up into a single ball.

"The magpie has many enemies and few friends; but one of the latter, whose eye caught beauty in all God's works, says: 'The sight of a magpie always gives me pleasure, its long tail and its distinct markings of white and black having a beautiful effect as it darts through the air. You may know this bird at a very great distance, either on the ground or on a tree, by the frequent and brisk movement of its tail—always up and down, never sideways.'

"And now," added the governess, "with a very little story we must leave the subject of magpies. The story, Malcolm, is told by Ovid, an ancient Latin writer with whom you will become acquainted after a few years. He tells us that a family of young ladies in Macedonia were all changed into magpies because they were such endless talkers. He is careful, too, to add that they gabbled on just the same after they had lost their own lovely forms :

" ' And still their tongues went on, though changed to birds,
In endless clack and vast desire of words.' "

Some one else says that if all great talkers were changed to magpies the number of birds would be very much increased."

"It is not nice to talk all the time, is it, Miss Harson?" asked Clara.

"Not at all nice, my dear," was the reply. "Great talkers are almost always tiresome to their friends, and I am very glad that my little girls are in no danger of being turned into magpies."

CHAPTER IV.

FIRST COUSINS: THE JACKDAW.

“THERE are two other birds of the *Corvus* or ‘crow family,” said Miss Harson the next evening—“the jackdaw and the raven—that resemble the magpie in so many of their traits that we must look upon them as first cousins.

“‘The habits of a jackdaw,’ it is said, ‘are known to everybody. Wherever found, he is the same active, bustling, cheerful, noisy fellow. Whether in the depth of a shady wood, remote from cities and from towns, or whether established in the nooks and niches of some Gothic cathedral-tower in the very midst of the world, it matters not to him. He seems to know neither care nor sorrow, ever satisfied, always happy. Who ever saw or heard of a moping, melancholy jackdaw?’

“The jackdaw resembles the magpie in size and color, but has not so long a tail. It makes its nest in old buildings and ruins of every kind, and is naturally half tame. When reared by hand, it will run about the yard with the poultry without seeming to see any difference between itself and its feathered companions. It does not talk so well as the magpie, but always seems to recognize its friends, and quite enjoys a walk with its master, its inquisitive head cocked on one side ready to criticise everything that passes. The bird looks comically satisfied with himself, and struts along with the most consequential airs. ‘He is a handsome bird, too, with his black head and wing-coverts glossed with blue and violet reflections, running off into gray, as if a smoke-wreath were floating over and partly hiding the rich dark shades of his plumage.’”

“I wish we had one to go out walking with us,” said Clara; “I think it would be nicer than a dog.—Don’t you, Edie?”

“Not nicer than our own dear Flip,” replied the little one as she bestowed on his

shaggy coat a caress; which the Scotch terrier received with a little yelp of satisfaction.

“The name ‘jackdaw,’” continued the governess, “comes from two notes which sound like ‘jack’ and ‘daw,’ and the bird’s strongest traits, besides gratitude toward those who are kind to it, are impudence and dishonesty. It is such an inveterate thief that it takes things just for the pleasure of taking them—things, too, that cannot possibly be of any use to it. ‘In the ruins of Holyrood chapel, in Edinburgh, a jackdaw was one day seen flying away with a large piece of lace toward its nest. A soldier undertook to climb up and recover it. He did so, but was surprised to find not only the stolen lace, but the following strange assortment of articles: part of a worsted stocking, a silk handkerchief, a frill, a child’s cap, besides several other things, but so ragged and worn out that it was almost impossible to make out what they were.’

“Holes and chinks are favorite dwelling-places for jackdaws, but the highest ones are always selected in preference to those

lower. In this way they can protect their eggs and young from the weasels. 'Rocks, the edges of neglected quarries, the projecting parapets of bridges, towers, steeples, ruins, the earth where it forms a very steep and crumbling bank, are all resorted to by the jackdaw. One would imagine that the birds are fonder of the society of man than of having the locality to themselves, but the fact is that these birds court the vicinity of human dwellings for the same reason as the house-swallows—because insects are more abundant there. Fifty towers may be built in an insectless wilderness, and never a jackdaw would care to nestle in them.' They are especially partial to church-towers. A poet sings :

“ ‘ There is a bird who by his coat,
And by the hoarseness of his note,
Might be supposed a crow,
A great frequenter of the church,
Where, bishop-like, he finds a perch,
And dormitory too.’

“Jackdaws, like swallows, will sometimes make their nests in unused chimneys. Even the hole of a spout has been found filled with

the sticks, straw, wool and feathers of which they make their nurseries, and the rabbit-burrows under ground have been appropriated in the same way. They are not particular, either, about the locality of their nests or the manner in which the materials for them are obtained. It is said that at Cambridge, where the jackdaws are very numerous, they appropriated the wooden labels attached to the plants in the Botanic Gardens to the purposes of building to such an extent as to cause great perplexity and serious inconvenience. As many as *eighteen dozen* of these labels—which were principally of fir, and about nine inches long and one inch broad—were taken out of a single chimney-shaft in which the birds were in the habit of forming their nests.’

“An immense amount of material is sometimes used for a nest. A jackdaw that began to build in the steep and narrow steps of a spiral stone staircase leading to a church-tower, finding that the steps were not broad enough for a firm base, piled up sticks to the height of five or six steps until a landing was reached, and here the queer-

looking structure was finished strongly, if it did not look elegant.

“Quite as sagacious was the conduct of a party of daws who were building in the bell-tower of the chapel of Eton College, and who, as all their timber had to be drawn through a narrow opening in the wall, broke or cracked each stick exactly in the middle, so that it could be doubled and pulled through more easily. Indeed, considering all his traits, the jackdaw is a wonderful bird. He certainly has been endowed by Providence with remarkable instincts.

“A traveler says that in the island of Ceylon jackdaws are very impudent and troublesome; so that it is almost impossible to keep them out of the houses, which are built open, on account of the heat, and cannot very easily be secured against intruders. In the town of Colombo, where they are in the habit of picking up bones and other things from the streets and yards and carrying them to the tops of the houses, a battle usually takes place for the plunder, to the great annoyance of the people below, on whose heads they shower down the

loosened tiles, leaving the roofs exposed to the weather."

"Oh!" laughed the children; while Malcolm wondered why such pests were not killed.

"You will presently see why," continued Miss Harson. "But the sauciness of these birds is certainly astonishing, as they will snatch food from the table even when there is company; and the more people there are around, the better they seem to like it. But, in spite of their unpleasant manners and mischievous tricks, they are never shot or molested, because their services in devouring all kinds of dirt, offal or dead vermin are invaluable in that hot climate, where such things, if allowed to remain, would soon produce dreadful disorders. The Hindus, too, have a superstitious fear of harming them.

"Jackdaws are greedy as well as thievish, and it is pleasant to know that these faults are sometimes punished. One of them flew with a piece of bread to the roof of a house and began to eat it. Two hungry little sparrows, who had followed the

large bird, soon perched close beside him, and probably begged in their quiet way for a morsel of the feast. But the jackdaw went on pecking the bread to pieces, and a few crumbs slid down the sloping roof, when one of the sparrows tried to secure them. But the greedy daw dashed angrily at him, and left the large piece of bread to save the crumbs. The other sparrow quickly seized the prize and flew away with it; his mate joined him, and they feasted royally; while the jackdaw, before he had recovered from his amazement at this boldness, was left without either bread or crumbs."

"Good for the sparrows!" cried Malcolm. "I'm glad the greedy jack got punished."

His little sisters echoed this sentiment; and Miss Harson asked, with a smile for her little pupil,

"You will scarcely want a jackdaw for a pet now, will you, Clara?"

"No'm," was the laughing reply; "I think that Flip is better than fifty jackdaws."

"I think he is better than *one*," said her

governess, very much amused. "We should certainly be obliged to leave the house if it was to be shared with fifty jackdaws."

"But, Miss Harson," queried Malcolm, "do you think we can blame the jackdaws for taking anything good to eat? Can they tell what they ought not to take?"

"No; we certainly cannot hold them to the eighth commandment, I admit. We may protect ourselves against their thieving, and the daws may suffer in consequence of that; but we cannot hold them responsible on questions of right and wrong. A stealing bird is a different creature from a thieving or pilfering boy."

CHAPTER V.

FIRST COUSINS (CONTINUED): THE RAVEN.

“**W**HAT a funny picture!” exclaimed Clara as the three heads bent over one of the volumes Miss Harson had brought out for their “bird-talks.”

The scene was an English farm-yard, with a comical-looking little dog peeping out of his kennel, before which stood an empty plate, hens, roosters and chickens walking around, a cat sunning herself in a corner, while in the middle stood an absurd raven with his head on one side and having a general air of silliness.

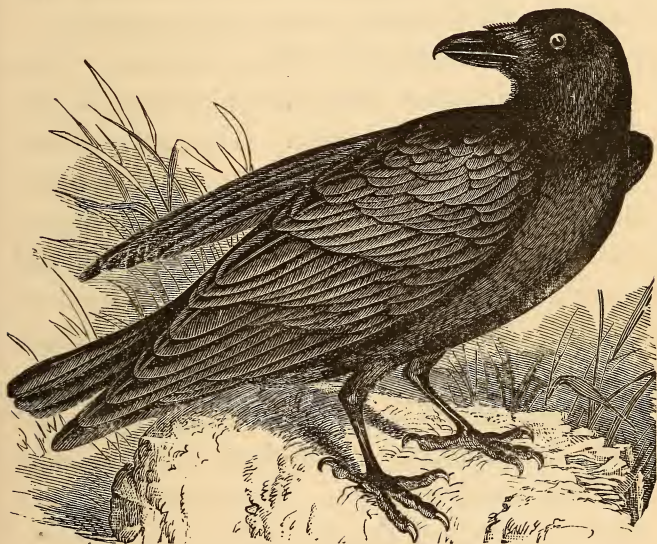
“I do not know why it is made to look like that,” said Miss Harson, “for the raven is not at all silly; it has even been looked upon with awe by superstitious people in all ages. It was considered a bird of evil omen, and its hoarse croak was often pro-

vocative of terror. The prophet Elijah was fed by ravens at the brook Cherith, where God had commanded him to hide himself from the wicked Ahab; for 'the ravens brought him bread and flesh in the morning and bread and flesh in the evening,' the bird, having been taught, in this case, 'to suppress its voracious instinct by the God who gave it.' Our word 'ravenous' comes from this voracity of the raven, and expresses an extreme degree of hunger."

Malcolm laughed, for he was sure that Miss Harson was looking at him; and he was very apt to be "ravenous."

"It is a large bird," continued the governess, "as the picture shows it to be, being two feet in length, including a tail of nearly nine inches; and it is so dark in hue that 'Black as a raven' has become a common expression. It is found in many parts of Europe and in some parts of America. No bird is more widely distributed over the surface of the globe. 'It croaks as gravely on the shores of the Black and Caspian Seas as with ourselves, visits the In-

dian metropolis of Calcutta, forces its way over the guarded shores of Japan, dwells among the busy inhabitants of America, ranges from Mount Etna to the Iceland



THE RAVEN (*Corvus corax*).

cold of Hecla, and braves the rigor of the Arctic regions as far as Melville's Island.'

"The raven, like the magpie, builds its nest in some high tree and is particularly brave in its defence. The young ones are easily tamed, and can be taught to speak

and to answer to a name. 'But they are so cunning and mischievous that it is necessary for those who harbor them to keep a constant watch on their motions, for they will catch up anything that is glittering and carry it off to some secret hiding-place.'

"Here," continued Miss Harson, "is a funny little story about the fondness of the raven for bright objects. The hero of the tale lived at an inn, and, among his other accomplishments, he had been taught to call the poultry to be fed, which he did very naturally. One day the table was set out for the coach-passengers. The cloth was laid with the knives and forks, spoons, mats and bread, and in that state it was left for some time, the room-door being closed, but the window open. The raven had very quietly watched the servant's proceedings, and was evidently seized with a desire to do something of the kind himself. When the coach was about arriving and the dinner ready to be carried in, the whole paraphernalia of the dinner-table had vanished. It was a moment of consternation. Silver spoons, knives, forks, were all gone. But

what was the surprise and amusement of the attendants to see through the open window, upon a heap of rubbish in the yard, the whole array carefully set out, and the raven performing the honors of the table to a numerous party of poultry which he had summoned about him and was very consequentially regaling with bread !”

“Wasn’t that funny?” said the children, laughing. “A raven’s dinner-party ! I how many nice stories you do find for us, Miss Harson !”

The young teacher smiled, but she did not tell her little charges that these “nice stories” and the “talks” which seemed to go on so easily often cost her much study and labor. She was satisfied and happy that her work was accomplishing its object.

“You are not going to stop, are you, Miss Harson?” asked Malcolm, with some anxiety. “There are lots of stories about ravens.”

“No, you insatiable boy,” said his governess, laughing ; “but I must make a selection from these ‘lots of stories.’ You

cannot have the face to expect them *all*? You must remember, too, that there are other birds in the world besides ravens. One remarkable thing about them is the great age to which they attain. In olden times they were said to live twenty-seven times the age of man; so that a raven eighteen hundred years old would have been quite a common sight; but this we cannot believe. This bird does not, like the jackdaw, hover around the dwellings of men, but chooses solitary places, generally in wild and mountainous districts; and a raven's nest is spoken of as being for centuries in a wild place where no human creature could get at it. Here is an account of a nest in a different place:

“ ‘In the centre of the grove there stood an oak which, though shapely and tall on the whole, bulged out into a large excrescence about the middle of the stem. On this a pair of ravens had fixed their residence for such a series of years that the oak was distinguished by the title of the “Raven Tree.” Many were the attempts of the neighboring youths to get at this

eyrie; the difficulty whetted their inclination, and each was ambitious of achieving the arduous task. But when they arrived at the swelling, it so jutted out in their way, and was so far beyond their grasp, that the most daring lads were awed and acknowledged the undertaking to be too hazardous. So the ravens built on, nest upon nest, till the fatal day arrived in which the wood was to be leveled. It was in the month of February, when these birds usually sit. The saw was applied to the butt, the wedges were inserted into the opening, the woods echoed to the heavy blows of the beetle, or mallet, the tree nodded to its fall; but still the dam sat on. At last, when it gave way, the bird was flung from her nest, and, though her parental affection deserved a better fate, was whipped down by the twigs which brought her dead to the ground.' "

"What wicked people!" cried the little ones, almost in tears over the fate of the poor raven, while Malcolm expressed a wish that the men had been soundly beaten with the twigs that were used to kill the

bird ; and even Miss Harson admitted that she herself would not have objected to this.

“It is quite amusing,” continued their governess, to divert their attention from this sad subject, “to read of the antics of ravens when they are at play : ‘They spend their leisure-time in striking and cuffing each other on the wing in a kind of playful skirmish, and when they move from one place to another frequently turn on their backs with a loud croak and seem to be falling to the ground. When this odd gesture betides them, they are scratching themselves with one foot, and thus lose the centre of gravity.’ They will play tricks on one another, too, when they have the chance ; and a story is told of two ravens who were kept in one large cage or pen in the Zoological Gardens in London. A visitor, it seems, threw in two pieces of bun, one for each ; but one of the ravens jumped from his perch, and before his companion could catch either of the pieces he secured them both in his beak and jumped back again to his perch, holding the pieces

of bun until his comrade was at the farther end of the cage. Then he flew down again and buried one of the pieces, which he carefully covered with gravel; and, jumping back to his perch with the other piece, he devoured it. He then hopped down for the buried piece, and, going back with that, devoured it in the same way, much to the annoyance of 'the little pig who had none.' "

The young audience pronounced this raven "a mean fellow," and Miss Harson said that she would tell them about the quarrels of the ravens and the jackdaws.

"They are sworn enemies," she said, "although so much alike; and the croak of a raven and the loud chattering of a flock of jackdaws, when heard together, generally mean battle. A raven's nest was placed in a fork at the very top of one of the highest in a clump of old beech trees, while their hollow trunks were occupied by a numerous colony of jackdaws. One of the ravens would dash into the midst of the jackdaws with a warlike croak and drive them off quite a distance, the daws

scolding and chattering, but not daring to remain. The next day, however, the person who watched them saw that the ravens were absent; and the jackdaws, taking advantage of this, had gathered in large numbers and were as busy about the beeches as a swarm of bees, some carrying materials to finish their nests, some conveying food to their mates, and all making the most of their time during the absence of their tormentors. The male raven came back first, and the jackdaws were thrown into great consternation. They all gathered on a single tree, keeping up an incessant chattering, and each bird changing rapidly from bough to bough, while the raven, who had brought some food in his beak, made two or three swoops into the terrified crowd; and, having routed the mob, he went to the tree in which his nest was placed.

“Dogs and ravens are usually very good friends; and a story about a dog and a raven is told by a gentleman who many years ago stopped at an inn in England. ‘Coming into the inn-yard,’ he says, ‘my chaise ran

over and bruised the leg of a favorite Newfoundland dog; and while we were examining the injury, Ralph, the raven, looked on also, and was evidently making his remarks on what was being done; for the minute my dog was tied up under the manger with my horse, Ralph not only visited him, but brought him bones and attended him with particular marks of kindness. I spoke of it to the hostler, who told me that the bird had been brought up with a dog, that the affection between them was mutual, and that all the neighborhood had been witnesses of the many acts of kindness performed by one to the other. Ralph's friend, the dog, in course of time had the misfortune to break his leg; and during the long period of his confinement the raven constantly waited on him, carried him his provisions and scarcely ever left him alone. Once, by accident, the stable-door had been shut, and Ralph had been deprived of his friend's company all night; but in the morning the hostler found the door so pecked away that had it not been opened Ralph would in another hour have

made his own entrance. The landlord not only confirmed the hostler's account, but mentioned many other acts of kindness shown by this bird to all dogs in general, but more particularly to maimed or wounded ones.' "

This story gave great satisfaction, and Miss Harson added:

"We must now take our leave of these interesting birds, and our next talk will finish the immediate family to which they belong."

CHAPTER VI.

SOME SOLEMN BIRDS: THE ROOK.

“**H**ERE is another large black bird,” said Malcolm, studying the picture. “It looks like a crow or a raven.”

“It is a very different bird, though,” replied his teacher, “in spite of its belonging to the same *Corvus* family. This is the famous English rook, a very social bird and much more respectable and aristocratic than the raven. There are few English parks that do not boast of their rookery; and people who own these beautiful parks will value almost as highly as the park itself the air of antiquity and respectability that a colony of these birds is supposed to give.

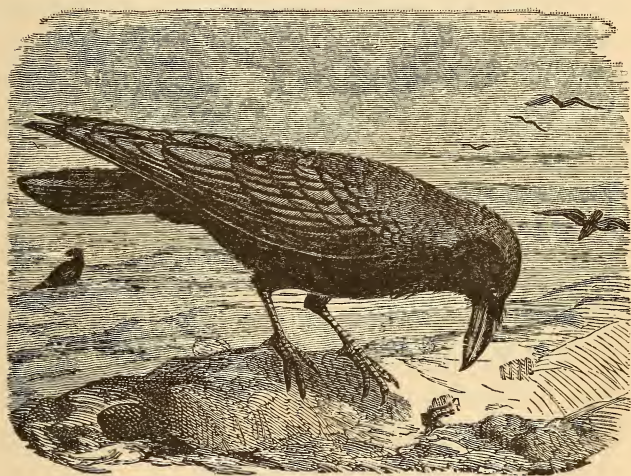
“Old elm trees are the favorite haunts of the rooks, and through an avenue of these trees will sometimes be heard a constant ‘Caw! Caw! Caw!’ kept up all day long. They are quite affectionate birds, sometimes

becoming so attached to their owner as to follow him to other quarters. This was the case with a farmer on whose premises a number of rooks built their nests, multiplying so largely in three or four years that the farmer had quite a rookery, which he very much prized. But he took a larger farm, and had to change his residence and leave his rooks, when, to his great surprise and pleasure, the whole rookery manifested such an attachment toward him as led them to desert their former habitation and accompany him to his new abode, which was about three-quarters of a mile off; and there they have continued to flourish ever since.

“Sometimes a rookery is formed by placing several bundles of sticks arranged like nests among the highest branches of the trees where the colony is to be made. Stray rooks in search of a home, mistaking these for ruins of old nests, are very apt to accept the invitation, if the locality suits them, and permanently to establish themselves.

“These birds have been called prophets because they invariably desert a tree that

is about to fall, but this happens only because signs of decay are visible in the upper branches, where they build, and which are not seen by men, while the tree seems solid below, instinct teaching them to avoid any spot that is unsound. They are also



THE ROOK (*Corvus frugilegus*).

said to predict rain by suddenly rising almost perpendicularly into the air, with great cawing and curious antics, until they have reached a considerable elevation, and then, having attained their object, whatever that may be, drop, with their wings almost

folded, until within a short distance of the ground, when they recover their propriety and alight either on trees or on the ground with their customary grave demeanor. This gravity has caused them to be called 'the clergymen among birds; grave, black-coated, sententious, with an eye to a snug sylvan abode.' There is a soft and pleasant sound in the voices of the young rooks—a sort of kindly chuckle like that of an infant being fed.

"Besides the invariable 'Caw!' rooks are capable of quite a variety of sounds, and their powers of imitation are quite wonderful. One is mentioned by a naturalist that could bark so exactly like a dog that, if out of sight, no one could tell the difference. Another imitated the note of a jackdaw.

"These birds have a curious habit, after spending the day abroad, of returning in a flock to their nests in the evening, when, as a poet says,

'rustling on the wing,
From their wide plumes the rooks thick darkness fling.'

"Rooks are much given to quarreling

and fighting and pulling one another's nests to pieces, yet they seem to be very sociably inclined, as many as ten or fifteen nests being found on one tree. Should a pair undertake to set up with a tree to themselves, their nest is at once plundered and destroyed, such a proceeding being probably looked upon in rook society as 'taking on airs.' Some unhappy pairs are not allowed to finish their nests till the rest have completed theirs. If they succeed in putting a few sticks together, a party comes and demolishes the whole.

"In spite of these squabbles, they are very prompt in punishing those who are evil-disposed, and very particular, while building, to avoid picking up a stick that has chanced to drop. Intruders from strange rookeries receive no mercy, as these birds do not approve of roving, and almost invariably keep to the tree in which they were born and bred. A singular strife once took place between the rooks which for many years had occupied a large tree in a garden and a pair of strange rooks that had established themselves on a neighboring tree.

The new comers had almost finished their nest, when their neighbors, disapproving of a new or rival colony, watched their opportunity, and, descending in a body, wreaked their vengeance on the nest, which they soon destroyed. This was repeated several times ; but at length, profiting by experience, one of the birds remained constantly at the nest to repel any attempts that might be made upon it by their enemies. The one remaining at home was supplied with food by the other. The attacks were still continued, but the persevering couple managed to rear their nestlings in spite of the opposition of the neighboring rooks.

“These birds seem able at once to distinguish friends from strangers. A clergyman who had a small rookery near his house said that when he walked under the trees they showed no signs of alarm, but when a stranger approached they were evidently uneasy and expressed by loud cawings and movements their wish for his departure. Rooks are represented as particularly shy and vigilant, but not so much so on the lawn and in the park as on the dis-

tant pastures and in the ploughed fields. 'In the neighborhood of towns they are always more wary than in the country; so that holding out a gun or a stick, or even the arm, or standing stock-still, is sure to make them fly off, unless you are several hundred yards distant.' "

"What cowards!" said Malcolm, contemptuously.

"To be cautious is not to be cowardly," replied his teacher, "and birds have generally reason enough to dread the approach of man. The rooks even appoint sentinels, when they are feeding in parties, to prevent the possibility of a surprise; and these rook-sentinels are so vigilant that it is by no means easy to get within shot of a foraging-party. Hence it is popularly believed that rooks can smell gunpowder, and the same thing is believed about our American crows :

" 'The carrion-crow smelleth powder, 'tis said,
As a soldier escheweth the taste of cold lead.' "

" 'We have often proved, however,' says an English writer, ' that it is just as difficult

to approach them without alarming the sentinels when only carrying an umbrella as when armed with a fowling-piece ; but that they have some knowledge of firearms appears from their being alarmed if a walking-stick is leveled at them, though no noise is made—a knowledge most probably acquired by the reiterated experience of having the nest-trees fired at when the young are fit to be made into pies.’”

“ ‘Pies’ !” exclaimed the children. “Do they make such birds into pies?”

“Yes,” replied Miss Harson. “Rook-pie used to be quite a common dish, and it may now occasionally be found on the table of some plain country squire. I am quite sure, though, that those who are not accustomed to it would prefer chicken-pie. ‘Eating crow’ is not considered very delectable with us.”

“Do they fight with the jackdaws, like the ravens?” asked Malcolm, who was very fond of hearing of battles.

“No,” was the reply ; “rooks are very fond of company. ‘The jackdaw, and even the starling, is allowed to associate with

them, and a mutual good understanding seems to exist among them. Even the sparrow is sometimes allowed to build its nest under the protection of the rook.' Jackdaws and rooks are particular friends. We are told that in the winter months the jackdaws and rooks flock together and collect their food on the same fields, and of the same kind, without any hostility; but in the spring, when the rooks return to their trees, the jackdaws collect about the rocks and towers.

“‘In the latter part of the season,’ says a naturalist, ‘when the rooks from one of the most extensive rookeries in Britain made daily excursions of about six miles to the warm grounds by the seaside, and in their flight passed over a deep ravine, in the rocky sides, or rather side (for they inhabit the sunny one), of which there were many jackdaws, I have observed that when the cawing of the rooks in their morning flight was heard at the ravine, the jackdaws, who had previously been still and quiet, instantly raised their shriller notes and flew out to join the rooks, both parties clamoring

loudly, as if welcoming each other; and that on the return—the time of which was no bad augury of the weather of the succeeding day—the daws accompanied the rooks a little past the ravine. Then both cawed their farewell and departed. What is more singular, I have seen, too frequently for its being merely accidental, a daw return for a short time to the rooks, a rook to the daws, or one from each race meet between and be noisy together for a space after the bands had separated.’”

The children thought this very wonderful; but little Edith suddenly inquired,

“Don’t rooks ever do anything real funny, Miss Harson?”

The governess smiled at her little pupil, who evidently thought the bird they had been discussing rather too grave to be interesting; and presently she replied:

“They *are* rather solemn, you know, as we found at the beginning, and, as a general thing, do not indulge in undignified antics, like many of their relations. But they are wonderfully intelligent, as are the other members of the crow tribe. The

book I have in my hand speaks of 'the drolleries of a rook belonging to the Ship Inn, at Faversham, which was much frequented by commercial travelers, whose chaises, if their stay was a brief one, were allowed to remain in the yard. The rook, in a listless manner, and as if he had no object in view, would hop about one, and at last disappear under the driving-seat. In a short time the horse was put to, and the traveler drove on to the next stage, when the rook issued from his concealment and by the most impressive croaks signified his delight at his escapade. This was of constant occurrence. Another bird on the same road was in the habit of accompanying a coach which changed horses at his master's house on its way to London till it met the down coach, when it transferred itself to that vehicle and returned home.'"

Edith laughed delightedly at the cunning of the rook, and Malcolm decided that such a sagacious bird would make a very desirable pet.

"Now," said Miss Harson, "we have become pretty well acquainted with four re-

markable birds that are relations of our common crow. Can you think of any others, Malcolm, with the same traits and belonging to the same tribe?"

After thinking for a moment, Malcolm ventured to suggest the blue jay.

"Yes," replied the governess; "he is found with us, but he is also common in England, and is the very handsomest of the corvine family. His disagreeable voice, however, detracts from his beauty, and the words,

" 'Proud of cerulean stains
From heaven's unsullied arch purloined, the jay
Screams hoarse,'

describe him exactly. He is like the magpie in being a great chatterer and very destructive. I wonder, now, which of all these birds we should choose to have around us?"

"There is most fun in magpies," said Malcolm, decidedly.

Edith thought a jackdaw would be nice to play with; while her sister and Miss Harson were in favor of rooks, as "better behaved" than the rest of the family. But no one seemed to want a raven.

“And now,” said their teacher, “you may like to know the scientific names of the members of the family. The jackdaw is *Corvus monedula*; the raven is *Corvus corax*; the rook is *Corvus frugilegus*; our crow is *Corvus Americanus*.”

CHAPTER VII.

MERRY WARBLERS: THE FINCH FAMILY.

“WE have now come to another large and interesting family of birds,” said Miss Harson—“the Fringillidæ or finch family—which contains many of the singing-birds of Great Britain.”

“Won’t you tell us about canaries some time?” asked Clara. “And isn’t my canary an English bird?”

“I scarcely think it can be called so, as it was born in an American cage,” replied her governess.—“Perhaps Malcolm can tell us where canaries really belong.”

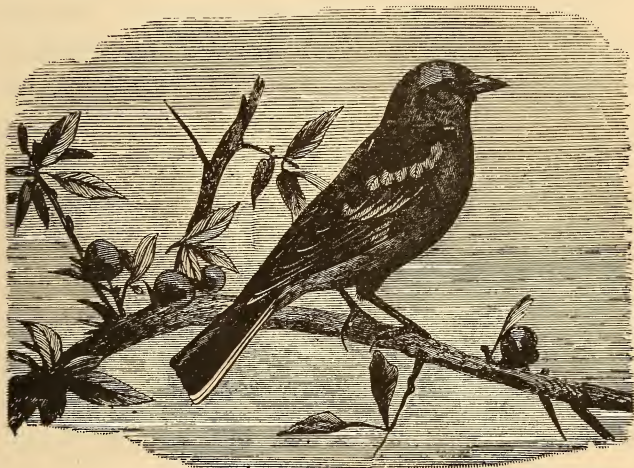
She saw that he was very anxious to do this, and he now answered promptly :

“In the Canary Islands.”

“That is their original birthplace,” continued Miss Harson, “and they belong to the very family I spoke of, for a canary is

neither more nor less than a finch. But on this particular evening," she added, with a smile, "I have prepared myself for chaffinches; and, with Clara's permission, we will let the canaries wait until their turn comes."

The little girl was quite satisfied with her



THE CHAFFINCH (*Fringilla cœlebs*).

teacher's arrangement, and Edith said that *she* wanted to hear about all the birds in the world.

"I cannot promise that you shall do that," said her governess, "but I will try to

tell you of all about which you are likely to care. Here is a picture of the chaffinch, a little bird about the size of a house-sparrow, with a chestnut-brown back tinged with olive-green, the tail black and ashen-gray mixed with white. He is a very popular bird on account of his sweet song, and is often deprived of his liberty and made to spend his life in a cage. He is very cheerful, though, even in captivity; and 'As gay as a chaffinch' is a common French proverb.

"The chaffinch is a 'smart, active, lively bird, always in a bustle, flitting here and there incessantly and staying long nowhere, always wearing a holiday look, so trim and spruce is he, and rattling through his song with wondrous volubility.' This reminds us of our own bobolink; the two seem alike in many respects.

"Master Chaffinch is not very popular in the spring, when he is at large, as he is a decided enemy to horticulture. He is fond of young shoots, and in the early morning he pays visits to the flower-garden and scatters buds of polyanthuses, which he attacks

and pulls to pieces as soon as they begin to push up through the leaves. He goes to the kitchen-garden for mustard, cress and radishes, being partial to pungent things. If, in sowing these seeds, a few are dropped on the surface, the chaffinch's sharp eye spies them at once; and down he goes to dig for hidden treasures, without the least twinges of conscience in regard to the future crop. It must be remembered, though, that for what he destroys in this way he pays liberally by cleansing off the seeds of noxious weeds that without his services would spring up and cover the ground. When Chaffie is disturbed in his meal, he does not usually go farther away than the nearest tree, hopping about until the danger is past and warbling his simple note—'twink' or 'pink' or 'tweet'—in a restless, anxious tone which shows that his nest is near.

"The chaffinch is found all over Europe, and is very common in Germany. It has a great many different names, all expressive of its brisk and lively habits or of other characteristics. It has been called the

pink, the spink, the twink, the shilfa, the skelly, the chaffy and the beech-finch. Under the name of shilfa a poet describes it in the following pretty sonnet:

“ ‘ List to the merry shilfa! On the air
It sweetly trills a morning song of praise,
And flits from bough to bough, now here, now there,
Nor long in any spot or posture stays—
A lively bird that, in the early days
When only fitful gleams of sunshine break
Athwart the leaden gloom and misty haze
That veil the infant year, will frequent make
The leafless woods re-echo to its call;
Treef! treef! a low, sweet note, and then a shrill
And sharp *fink! fink!* upon the ear doth fall,
Like speech expressive of a sentient will;
As brisk, as merry and as loved a bird
As any in the fields and woodlands heard.’

“The song of the chaffinch in its wild state is particularly clear; but, although gay and sweet, it is rather monotonous. After each twitter it seems to utter the sounds of the words ‘Which do you?’ and, in addition to its other names, the gay little bird is known in some neighborhoods as ‘the which-do-you?’

“The German chaffinches are the best singers, and in the district of Thuringia the people are great admirers of this bird.

They will go as far as the Hartz Mountains—a distance of eighty miles—in hopes of catching a fine singer. A cow is often considered a fair exchange for a first-class warbler; so that, in speaking of a valuable chaffinch, it is common to say, ‘It is worth a cow.’ A good judge of chaffinches is delighted when he hears one that is able perfectly to sing what is called ‘the double trill of the Hartz;’ and it is said that those who are able to accomplish this song might easily be taught to speak, as it requires a distinct pronounciation of the various syllables.

“Wild chaffinches are frequently heard imitating the notes of other birds, and they will exactly repeat the notes of the canary when caged near it. The nightingale also is imitated; but the powers of different birds vary greatly, one chaffinch being able to repeat a song which it has heard but once, while another will take six months to learn it. These poor little birds have even been deprived of sight to make them sing at night as well as in the daytime; but such cruelty will certainly be punished by

the God who made them, and whose loving care is over all his creatures.

“The chaffinch’s nest is an exquisite piece of workmanship—as beautiful as that made by the humming-bird. As a general thing, it is built on the branch of a tree, and is made with great ingenuity. The upper part is as perfectly round as if it had been turned, and it is fastened to the bough with cobwebs, while hair, moss and small twigs are the materials. It is lined with feathers, thistledown and hair, while the outside is ornamented with lichens from the tree fastened on with cobwebs. Altogether, it is a very pretty and luxurious cradle for the four or five baby-chaffinches that are expected to occupy it; and it is a very safe one, for it can scarcely be distinguished from the trunk of the tree that supports it.

“The poet Cowper tells of a pair of chaffinches which chose a block near the head of the mast of a vessel lying at a wharf as the place for their nest, and four eggs were laid in it. When the vessel moved, the birds followed it; and, though

the block was sometimes lowered to display the curiosity, the nest was not forsaken. The father-bird, however, would seldom visit the nest, while the hen never left it except when she descended for food."

"That was not a polite bird," observed Malcolm, "not to feed his mate while she was attending to the eggs."

"He certainly was not," replied Miss Harson; "but it is pleasant to think that it is not a common habit with birds to let the hen forage for herself while sitting. Another chaffinch that had built its nest in a cavity made by three boughs springing from the top of an old stump was watched by some children; and when the parent-bird went off to look for food, they sprinkled seeds and rice around the edge of the nest. The little bird hopped about and devoured these with evident pleasure on its return, and it was the children's delight to provide it a daily supply. By the time the young ones were hatched, Mamma Chaffinch seemed to expect her provisions as regularly as the day came round; and she was never disappointed. But one day a bold

little sparrow made a dive at the chaffinch's food and carried off some of it, when away rushed the indignant bird after the thief, had a pitched battle with her, and, having driven her away, returned triumphant."

"I wish we could feed a little chaffinch," said Edith at the conclusion of this story. —"Let us look at all the old stumps, Clara, and perhaps we shall find a bird that wants something to eat."

Clara agreed to this; and the little sisters almost expected some bird to be obliging enough to build her nest where they could have the pleasure of feeding her.

CHAPTER VIII.

HOME PETS: THE CANARY-BIRD.

“**N**OW, Clara,” said Miss Harson when they were gathered cozily in the schoolroom for another bird-talk, “I think that I am ready to attend to your canaries. I wonder if Master Black-crest will understand that he and his relations are being talked of?”

“Black-crest” was a beautiful canary that had been given to Clara about a year previous, and the little girl was very fond of her pet. His cage was hung in one of the sunny schoolroom windows when it was not too sunny, and he was so fond of the sound of human voices that he would often break forth into loud trills when people were talking; so that to obtain peace and quietness it was necessary to extinguish him with a sheet of brown paper wrapped

around his cage. He was under this cover now, but there was no danger of his pricking up his ears, even if he had any, to hear what was going on, for his little black head was tucked under his wing and he was fast asleep.

"This pretty little bird," continued Miss Harson, "which is at home in so many different countries, really belongs, as Malcolm has told us, in the Canary Islands, where it breeds on the banks of rivulets. About three hundred and fifty years ago a ship bound for Leghorn took the first canaries to Europe. This ship foundered, or sank, near the island of Elba. This accident set the birds at liberty. Finding the climate very much like the one they had left, they began to pair and build their nests there in quite a homelike fashion. But their beautiful notes were their ruin: all the bird-catchers were after them to transplant them into every country of Europe, and it is said that not one can now be found on the island where first they landed."

"I shall always think of Napoleon and canaries together now," said Malcolm.

“Both have helped to make interesting a somewhat unknown island,” replied his governess, “but the short residence of the canaries there is not so well known as that



THE CANARY (*Fringilla Canaria*).

of Napoleon. The bird is said at first to have resembled a linnet, and to have had a gray back and wings, with a greenish hue on the under-part of the body. But the great changes through which it has passed from a wild state to domestication, the differences of climate and mating with birds not of the same family, though of the same species,—all these things have made cana-

ries of almost every color. The most common hue is a bright sulphur known as 'canary-color,' but there are also gray, yellow, white, blackish and reddish-brown, besides mixtures of these with some other shades."

"What color is Black-crest?" asked Clara, with much interest; for she wanted him to be of the very best color that a canary could wear. She was therefore highly pleased when her governess told her that her pet bird belonged to one of the most desirable kinds, being of a golden yellow as to his body, with black head, wings and tail.

"Canaries that are irregularly mottled or spotted," added Miss Harson, "as well as those of the same color throughout, are not considered of much value. The plumage of the male is generally brighter in color than that of his mate, his head larger and longer, the body more slender, the neck not so short; and the legs are longer and straighter. The ordinary size of this little bird is about five inches, measuring from the beak to the tip of the tail.

"It is a very pretty sight to watch canaries making their nests, which they usually do in April. A supply of fine moss and lichen is all they need, though the hair of various animals, swine's bristles, fine, dry hay, shreds of paper and woolen or linen cloth are often given. The birds always select the coarse materials to begin with, and keep the fine, soft ones to line the nest. The mother-bird is generally the builder, the male only choosing the place for the nest and carrying her the materials. How wonderfully are these little creatures taught by their Creator to construct their homes!"

"Let us give Black-crest some things for a nest," said Clara, very earnestly; "it would be so cunning to see him make it!"

"Black-crest is an old bachelor," said Malcolm, laughing; "what does he want of a nest? He hasn't any mate."

"We cannot have everything in one bird, dear," replied Miss Harson, kindly; for the little girl had appealed to her. "Black-crest is a very fine singer and a beautiful

bird, and for these very reasons he would not be likely to build a nest. The house-keepers among canaries are not so pretty and do not sing so well as their mates; some of them even do not sing at all. So we will just be thankful for Black-crest as he is.

“The canary lays five or six eggs, of a sea-green color spotted and streaked with reddish-brown, and the baby-canaries are among the ugliest things imaginable, though in this they do not differ much from all young birds. I shall never forget my disappointment, as a child, at the first sight of some eagerly-looked-for fledglings. I had expected to see lovely little miniatures of the parent-birds, with wings and feathers complete; and when I beheld four hideous little naked objects that seemed to be all mouth, I was very much disgusted. It is twelve days before the little birds have any feathers, and during that time they have to use their mother’s wing for a coverlet. At thirteen days old they are able to feed themselves, and can then be put into separate cages.

“‘The canary,’ says an English writer, ‘has always been a favorite cage-bird, not only on account of the beauty of its plumage and the excellence of its song, but also of its docility, affectionate disposition and the readiness with which it breeds in confinement. Another source of gratification connected with this bird is the observation of its peculiarities of disposition. Some are melancholy, others lively; some of a peaceful, others of a quarrelsome, disposition; some docile, others stupid. Their chief recommendation, however, consists in their loud, lively and various song, which is continued throughout the year—in some cases, even in the moulting season. Some, which are very much esteemed, will sing even at night if a light be placed near their cage—a peculiarity which, though natural in some, is in most the result of long training.’

“Canaries from the Tyrol, which imitate the nightingale’s song, hold the first rank. Next to these come the English canaries which have acquired the warbling of the wood-lark. In Thuringia those are most

esteemed which have been taught to descend through the notes of an octave in a clear, silvery tone, occasionally introducing a trumpet-like song.

“The canary has so fine an ear and so good a memory of what it has heard that it can reproduce sounds of almost any kind. The variety of its own song arises from this very gift, as it has been accustomed when young to imitate the songs of all the birds it hears; and it can quite easily be taught particular tunes. Short words, too, have been distinctly uttered, and it has been trained to distinguish names, colors, letters and numbers, and to perform certain actions at the word of command.”

“Aren’t the people who teach them very cruel to them?” asked Malcolm.

“I am afraid that often they are,” responded his governess; “and I never hear of learned canaries and their tricks without thinking how the poor little birds must have suffered. Some one writes, ‘I once saw a female in the possession of a person in Alsace which selected from an alphabet

and placed in order the letters of certain words, added, subtracted and multiplied, and indicated, by means of numbers, the exact time of a watch. He had also three males with him, which were able to select letters and numbers which were named. *Hunger* had been the chief means used in the education of all.' So you see that the poor little pupils were probably half starved before they learned their lessons. I wonder if it would make my scholars very bright to keep them without dinner and tea?"

"O-h!" groaned the children at this idea, but the next moment they laughed. "As if our dear Miss Harson," they said, with kisses, "*could* do such a thing!" And, having promised not to treat them like canaries, their governess proceeded:

"Wonderful things are told of these clever little birds. Many years ago some were exhibited which, among other curious doings, acted a regular trial and execution scene. First, a canary was brought from prison by his comrades, who formed a circle round him. One lifted up his leg, as if to behead the culprit, who straightway fell

down, pretending to be dead ; he was then carried off and buried in sand, while others sang a dirge during the ceremony. Among performances by goldfinches, linnets and canary-birds—all belonging to the same *Fringillidæ* family—one appeared dead and was held up by the tail or the claw without exhibiting any sign of life ; a second stood on its head with its claws in the air ; a third imitated a Dutch milkmaid going to market with pails on her shoulders ; a fourth mimicked a Venetian girl looking out at a window ; a fifth appeared as a soldier and mounted guard as sentinel ; a sixth was a cannoneer, with a cap on its head, a fire-lock on its shoulder and a match in its claw, and discharged a small cannon. The same bird also acted just as if it had been wounded ; it was wheeled in a little barrow to convey it to the hospital, after which it flew away before the company. The seventh turned a kind of windmill ; and the last bird stood in the midst of some fireworks, which were discharged all around it, and this without its exhibiting the least sign of fear.”

The children were delighted with these accounts, and begged Miss Harson to tell them all the stories she had ever heard about canaries; but she said that she believed she had exhausted her stock, and that they reminded her of hungry little birds with their mouths open for food.

"A canary-school must be funny," said Malcolm; "I should like to go to one. I don't see, though, how any one can teach a bird to sing."

"This is quite a business," replied Miss Harson, "and there are different ways of doing it. In France and Holland regular societies are formed to educate chaffinches and get up vocal contests. The birds are placed in their cages, a few yards from each other; then one of them begins his strain, which is replied to by another, the audience being ordered to keep perfectly quiet, lest the bird's attention should be distracted by their remarks or applause. The contest is kept up as long as the birds will continue to sing, and the one that has the last word is pronounced the victor. But much cruelty is practiced here, as

well as elsewhere, to produce a perfect singer."

"Why are people so cruel to birds?" asked Malcolm. "It seems to me that in one way and another they are always being treated badly."

"I am sorry to say," replied his governess, "that it is for the very reason that should make us particularly kind to them—their helplessness and inoffensiveness. We do not read that people are cruel to beasts of prey and noxious serpents—creatures that can protect themselves—but to insects and birds and helpless things generally. The dear little birds, too, are in many respects our best friends in the animal kingdom, cheering us with their songs and clearing our gardens of destructive insects; and to give them the little care and kindness that they require seems but common gratitude. If men only remembered that God made and cared for the birds, they might treat the little things more tenderly."

"Do canary-birds have to be taught to sing," asked Clara, "just as people do?"

“Not just as people do, dear,” was the reply, “but the canary’s song is said to be in a great measure artificial, because so much pains are always taken to make it sing. One of these birds will sometimes live in a family for several months without uttering a single note, while every one that comes near its cage pipes to it, whistles to it, chirps and ‘peeps,’ until some fine morning it will burst forth into a song which it has finally learned.”

“That is the way Black-crest did,” said Clara. “Don’t you remember, Miss Harson, how surprised we all were, one day when Malcolm had been whistling to him, to hear him sing?”

Miss Harson remembered perfectly, and thought that Black-crest would probably have remained silent all his life if no one had tried to make him use his powers.

The children soon went off to bed, very much pleased with what they had learned of canaries.

CHAPTER IX.

A DEAR LITTLE BIRD: THE LINNET.

“**I** WONDER what bird we shall hear about this evening?” said Clara as Miss Harson opened one of their favorite books.

“This is to be our first visitor ;” and their governess showed them a beautifully-formed little bird scarcely more than five inches long. “Let me introduce Miss Linnet *Fringilla*, who may be described in few words as ‘a perfect darling.’ She has a rusty-brown back mottled with gray and white below, and is red and reddish-white on the sides of the breast. You will see, too, that she has a black forked tail, the feathers being edged with reddish-white.

“This is a famous cage-bird in both England and Germany. It is found in a wild state all over Europe. In summer it

lives in the woods and groves, but in the autumn it prefers the open fields where seeds are plentiful. In winter it travels about from place to place in search of



THE LINNET (*Fringilla cannabina*).

food; so that at that season it may be called a feathered tramp.

“The linnet delights in all kinds of seeds, and it is thought that it gets its name from its fondness for the seeds of the flax-plant—*Linum usitatissimum*, from which our word ‘linen’ comes. ‘They are usually seen in flocks feeding upon small seeds,

particularly those of the cruciform plants, with other seeds of the flax, thistle and dandelion.'

"The plumage of this bird varies so much at different seasons and ages that it is called brown, gray and rose linnet; also whin linnet, the greater redpole and the lintie, the last name belonging to it especially in Scotland. A Scotch poet says :

" ' I wald na gie the lintie's sang—
Sae merry on the broomy lea—
For a' the notes that ever rang
From a' the harps o' minstrelsie.
Mair dear to me, where buss or breer
Amang the pathless heather grows,
The lintie's wild sweet note to hear,
As on the ev'ning breeze it flows.' "

"I like *lintie* best," said little Edith.

"Is a rose linnet pink, Miss Harson?" asked Malcolm.

"No," replied his governess, "though it should be, I think, to deserve the name. The rose linnet is of a beautiful red on the head and breast; but caged birds and the female linnets do not have this gay plumage, being of a decidedly gray tinge.

"The linnet's song is very clear and

sweet, and there are certain notes in it—called ‘the linnet’s crow’—which occur most frequently in the best singers. It is



THE FLAX-PLANT (*Linum usitatissimum*).

said that if, when taken from the nest, it is fed on a mixture of soaked bread-crumbs, rape-seed and hard-boiled egg, it can be taught not only the songs of other birds—

the nightingale, chaffinch, lark, etc.—but also to repeat various airs and melodies if constantly whistled in its hearing. It has even been known to learn to talk, adds the same authority, though not very distinctly.”

“How funny it would be,” exclaimed Clara, “if all the birds and animals should talk like people!”

“A young linnet, our writer continues, can be taught to sing exactly like a nightingale; and he speaks of the pleasure of hearing the docile little bird trill forth the nightingale’s song at a season of the year when the nightingales are silent. ‘The linnet,’ says another admirer, ‘gives place to few birds in point of song. His tone is mellow and his notes sprightly, artfully varying into the plaintive strain, and returning again to the sprightly with the greatest address and most masterly execution.’ But, after all, the song of free linnets must be pleasanter to those who are not willing to deprive these dear little birds of the liberty which God gave them.

“In winter these little roamers are seen in immense flocks that seem to have come

together from various parts of the country. In spring they will assemble in the warm sunshine, lighting on some large tree, when all chirp in concert, as if to celebrate the breaking up of winter and their settling in their summer home. This home is always made in dry, barren grounds where there is plenty of heath, furze and other low bushes.

“Linnets are very gentle little creatures and easily tamed; they may even be taught to fly in and out of a window; but great care is necessary in their training, as they are peculiarly shy. It is not easy to catch the wild ones, but they are sometimes taken in autumn with limed twigs and nooses set among the lettuces, of which vegetables they are very fond. The shepherds also arrange the salt-troughs for the sheep in such a manner as to entrap the linnets, which come to pick up the scattered saline grains.

“These birds like to build their nests in close, low bushes, choosing garden-bushes, hedges or low, bushy trees. The nest is ‘formed on the outside of dry stubble

mixed with hay. The middle coat is formed of finer hay mixed with hair, very firmly and neatly plaited together. The inner coat, or lining, consists of hair, wool and the down of the seeds of willows, over which is a layer of fine fibres of roots. The whole is a neat piece of work, round, well finished and very handsome.'

"Twice a year there are five or six bluish-white eggs marked with flesh-colored and brown spots in the linnet's nest, and the affection of the parent-birds for their young is very strong. A nest that had four scarcely-fledged young ones in it was found by some children, who carried it home to rear the little birds. But their constant chirping soon brought Papa and Mamma Linnet on hasty wing to the scene; and the two birds fluttered around the children all the way to the house, when the nest was carried up to the nursery and placed outside the window."

"What cruel children, not to give the little birdies back!" exclaimed Clara.

"They ought never to have taken the nest," said Malcolm.

Edith, too, expressed her sympathy for the kidnapped birds, and it gave Miss Harrison great pleasure to find that her young charges always condemned such acts of thoughtless cruelty.

“The little linnets were well taken care of,” continued the governess, “for the old birds soon appeared at the window and fed their family without seeming at all disturbed by the people who were watching them. The experiment was then tried of placing the nest on a table in the middle of the room and leaving the window open. It was very interesting to see the parents fly boldly into the room and feed the little ones as before. Finally, the nest was put into a bird-cage, to try them still farther; but the linnets returned, hopped into the cage and fed their brood as usual, actually perching on the cage toward evening without minding the noise of several children who were playing around.

“This went on for several days, when, alas! an unfortunate accident put an end to the pretty sight. The cage had been again put on the outside of the window,

but a sudden and heavy fall of rain came down and drowned the little birdies in their nest. The poor linnets who had so faithfully fed their young ones in their captivity came as usual and looked wistfully in at the window without seeing the four little open mouths. They hovered about the house for several days, but finally disappeared."

"What a pity!" cried the children. "Poor little birds!"

"Miss Harson," asked Edith, timidly, after what she considered an ominous silence, "isn't there more about linnets? They are such lovely little birds!"

"Not very much, dear," was the reply, "but I will tell you what there is. Linnets are said to be very affectionate to those who feed and attend them, and we have just seen how devoted they are to their little ones, braving all sorts of dangers to minister to their wants. It seems, too, that they are capable of strong attachments among themselves, and some one tells of two male linnets that became perfectly devoted to each other, although they

had not been brought up together. When one sang the other joined in, and at night each always slept on that side of his cage which was nearest to his friend. Their attachment was more fully ascertained when they were set at liberty while their cages were being cleaned. They then flew to each other's cage, and at length were occasionally indulged by being put together in the same cage, when they always expressed their high gratification by fluttering toward each other, joining their bills and each in turn gently pecking the tongue of his friend. After some time one was suffered to fly abroad in the open air, whilst the cage of the other was hung on the outside of the window as a pledge for the return of his friend. When at liberty they appeared greatly delighted with the company of the wild linnets, with whom they would range for several hours together ; but the temptation of even love and liberty could not induce this little Damon and Pythias to forsake each other. As soon as the hour of rest approached the wanderer always returned to the empty cage, which

was placed by the side of that of his friend."

"What does 'Damon and Pythias' mean?" asked Malcolm.

"Damon and Pythias were two Greek friends who were so strongly attached to each other that each was ready to die for the other; so, when a very unusual degree of friendship is to be implied, the persons referred to are spoken of as Damon and Pythias."

Little Edith made the others laugh by inquiring if she and Clara were not Damon and Pythias. Their governess said, as she kissed the rosy cheeks of each sister,

"We have wandered a long way from linnets, I think, and it is quite time that my little birdies were snugly tucked up in their nests."

CHAPTER X.

ALMOST A CANARY.

“WHILE we are on the subject of finches,” said Miss Harson, “we must not pass by the British goldfinch—a particularly interesting bird ; and there is much more to be said of him than of his American cousin.”

“It’s such a pretty picture,” said the children, “that we hope there is a great deal to tell us about him.”

“He is a thoroughly English bird,” continued their governess, “and particularly an English cage-bird. You see how much he looks like a canary ; they might almost be taken for twin-brothers. The goldfinch, however, is nearly six inches long ; so that it is rather larger than the canary. Its plumage, too, is darker, and it has been said to have the most beautiful dress of

any of the British birds. And, what is uncommon with birds of fine feathers, it is also one of the best singers of the English groves. It has been described as wearing a fanciful livery of nicely-shaded buff and brown, melting away into white on the under-parts and edged with glossy black ornamented here and there with gold and crimson.

“The goldfinch is found all over Europe, and throughout the summer frequents gardens, groves and such mountainous districts as are not altogether uncultivated. It is not a bird of passage, but in autumn flocks of at most from fifteen to twenty collect and make excursions in search of thistledown, forsaking districts where the snow is thick upon the ground for others where the weather is more genial.

“It is often called the thistle-finch, on account of its fondness for the seeds of this class of plants, which the farmer would find much more troublesome were it not for the industry of this bright little bird. Some one who has watched a flock of them at work on an autumn day says: ‘How curi-

ously they hang on the prickly stems and leaves! With what adroitness do they thrust their bills into the heart of the involucre! and how little do they regard us as they ply their pleasant pursuit unconscious of danger and piping their mellow call-notes!

“Being handsome and lively, as well as a sweet singer, the goldfinch is in great request as a cage-bird; but a poet says feelingly,

“ ‘ I love to see the little goldfinch pluck
The groundsel’s feathered seed, and twit and twit,
And then, in bower of apple-blossoms perched,
Trim his gay suit and pay us with a song :
I would not hold him prisoner for the world.’

“ Besides several intricate twittering notes its song consists of certain tones which resemble those of a harp; and it is valued in proportion to the number of times the syllable ‘Fink!’ recurs. The goldfinch may also be taught to whistle certain airs and to repeat the song of other birds; but in this respect it does not equal the linnet and the canary. It can be taught, however, to do wonderful things, such as discharging a

small cannon and pretending to be dead, also drawing up its food and water by means of a curious arrangement. This consists of a band of soft leather in which are bored four holes, and through these holes the feet and the wings of the bird are put, the ends being joined to a ring on its belly. To this ring is attached a small chain fastened at the other end to the seed-and-water vessel."

"I shouldn't think the little bird would like that one bit," said Edith, quite indignantly.

"I have no doubt it would prefer being free, but its wishes are not consulted. When the bird is hungry, it pulls the chain up a little way with its beak, puts its foot on it to retain the length already gained, then pulls again, and so continues until it can get at the food and drink. Some cages are so contrived that when the bird takes a seed from the box it is obliged at the same time to ring a bell.

"Another goldfinch was chained to a perch instead of being kept in a cage. Its food was put into a box resembling a water-

fountain used for cages, and the little opening at which the bird was fed had a cover loaded with lead to make it fall. With its bill the bird raised this by pushing down a lever or handle which raised the lid of the box, after which, by putting its foot on the lever, it could feed at leisure.

"A redpole—a species of linnet—was chained on a similar perch in the same room; this bird fed himself from an open box without having to work for his food like his neighbor the goldfinch. He had evidently watched the whole proceeding, though, and saw that by touching the handle he could get at the goldfinch's food, if it was within reach; and this he kept in mind until he could make use of his information. One morning, having been let loose, and his own seed-box being empty, he flew at once to the perch of his friend, raised the lid of the seed-box with his bill, and then, laying hold of it with one foot, kept it open till he had made a good breakfast."

"How surprised the goldfinch must have been!" said Clara; and the children all

laughed, being much amused over the red-pole's exploit.

Malcolm "guessed that he was more surprised than pleased," and Miss Harson thought that this was probably the case.

"The goldfinch," continued the governess, "excels as a nest-builder. A British writer says: 'It builds one of the most elegant nests that our English finches produce. Moss, lichens, wool and grass artistically intertwined form the outside of the fabric, which is generally hidden in a quiet orchard or secluded garden, where, in the midst of some evergreen—an arbutus, perchance—it is protected from the prying eye by the compact leafy screen of the well-grown, healthy shrub. The delicate down of the willows or dwarf early-seeding plants, the choicest lambs' wool and the finest hair form the warm lining in which the bluish-white eggs dotted with a few rich brown spots are deposited.'

"But what do you think of two little goldfinches actually tying their nest fast to make it secure? for this is what they really did. The pair had built their nest on a

small branch of an olive tree ; after hatching their brood, the parents saw that the weight of the growing family would soon be too great for the strength of the branch which supported the nest, for it was even then beginning to give way. Something must be done to prevent the nest from falling to the ground, and presently they were seen to pick up a small string and with it fasten the bending twig to a stronger and higher branch of the tree. In this way the little nest was saved."

"Why don't *we* see birds do things, Miss Harson?" asked Malcolm, who began to think that there was a great deal of fun going on with which he had nothing to do.

"We do not have the opportunities," was the reply. "These accounts are generally written by naturalists, who make the creatures of which they write a constant study. A great deal may be learned, though, by any one who will keep eyes and ears open—that is, be ready to observe everything that goes on around him ; and I think we must form ourselves into a

society of this kind and see how much we can learn every day."

The children were delighted with this idea, and at first there seemed to be danger of their forgetting the little goldfinches. But as soon as Miss Harson spoke of another nest they were all attention again.

"Another pair," said she, "happened to build in the garden of a naturalist who was fond of observing the manners and habits of birds. They had, as usual, formed the groundwork with moss and dried grass, but on his scattering small pieces of wool they in a great measure left off the use of the first materials and employed the wool. He next provided them with cotton, which they immediately collected; the third day he supplied them with down, on which they forsook both the others and finished their work with it. Is it not wonderful that these little creatures are so well taught by their Creator?"

"An African traveler mentions some singular nests built by birds which he describes as goldfinches. The account of the nests is very curious, and illustrates the social

manners of a set of little birds like brethren dwelling together in unity. 'A tree a little distance from our wagon,' says the traveler, 'had two remarkable nests in it. The one was about four yards in circumference, and the other three, and about a yard in depth. They were built of coarse grass. One of these nests had seventeen holes in the bottom, by which the birds enter; the other had seven, At one time I saw about a hundred birds come out of them. Instead of being the nest of a single pair, they seemed to be towns of birds or the property of a single pair, in which they accommodate all their descendants. A horned-owl had taken possession of the outside of the roof of the largest for a nest. The whole was neatly thatched and had a hollow in the middle to contain the owl, but no passage leading to the inside.' I should call this nest," added Miss Harson, "a sort of 'French flat' among birds;" and her little scholars thought the name a very good one.

"It is astonishing," continued the governess, "to read how quickly little nests

are often built when there is occasion for haste. A canary was seen to begin her labor about five o'clock in the morning, and she worked so hard that before seven it was entirely finished. She had often been disturbed in her work before on account of building in inconvenient places, and this was probably the reason why she hurried so with this nest—to get it done before people would see and interfere with her. Here are some pretty lines :

“ ‘ The goldfinch weaves, with willow-down inlaid,
And cannach-tufts, his wonderful abode.
Sometimes, suspended at the limber end
Of plane-tree spray, among the broad-leaved shoots,
The tiny hammock swings to every gale ;
Sometimes in closest thickets 'tis concealed ;
Sometimes in hedge luxuriant, where the brier,
The bramble and the plum-tree branch
Warp through the thorn, surrounded by the flowers
Of climbing vetch and honeysuckle wild,
All undefaced by Art's deforming hand.
But mark the pretty bird himself ! How light
And quick his every motion, every note !
How beautiful his plumes, his red-tinged head,
His breast of brown ! And see him stretch his wing :
A fairy fan of golden spokes it seems.
Oft on the thistle's tuft he nibbling sits,
Light as the down ; then 'mid a flight of downs
He wings his way, piping his shrillest call.' ”

CHAPTER XI.

THE BULLFINCH.

“**I** SN’T he cunning,” exclaimed the children, “with his great big round eye that looks like a button, and a worm in his mouth! He is so fat and funny, and has such a short little nose!”

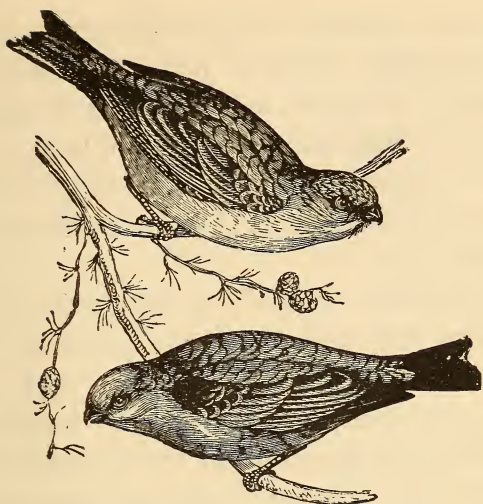
“‘Bill,’ you mean,” said Miss Harson. The children were commenting on a portrait of the bullfinch. “He *is* something of a dumpling in shape, being just the length of a chaffinch, but much larger around. His plumage is beautifully colored—the throat, back and shoulders, dark gray; the lower end, white; the breast and upper part of the belly, a rich crimson. He has a steel-blue tail which shines with a black lustre and is slightly forked. The caged bullfinches vary in color, being sometimes white with a few dark spots on the

back, and sometimes black. Sometimes they are speckled, and sometimes the plumage is partly like that of a canary and partly like that of a bullfinch."

"I should think, then," said Malcolm, "that it would be very hard to know a bullfinch from other birds."

"It cannot be very easy," was the reply, "for those not accustomed to them; but they have many distinguishing traits besides plumage. The bird is found all over Europe—as far north as Sweden and Russia. In Germany it is seen in pairs in all woody districts. In winter it migrates in search of berries. In England it is called 'pick-a-bud,' because of its mischievous fondness for the blossom-buds of fruit. Trees are frequently whitewashed to keep them away, but the defence does not last long.

"Gooseberry-bushes are very tenderly watched in England, and Master Bullfinch is too good a Briton not to be fond of them. Some one tells of his struggles to keep his bushes from the dangerous bill of this little marauder, and his delight at finding that a

THE BULLFINCH (*Pyrrhula vulgaris*).

straw rope wound about them kept the bird away. But it took the bullfinches only a year to find out that straw ropes would not hurt them, and then they feasted on gooseberry-buds to their hearts' content.

“Friends of the bullfinch say that most of the fruit-buds which they destroy have at the core a worm which would prevent its yielding fruit if left, and that the bird takes the bud for the sake of the insect, but gardeners seem to prefer the chance of the worms to the certainty of the birds.

“The bullfinch very carelessly builds its nest of twigs, lining it with moss and concealing it as much as possible in fir trees or hedges. Sometimes there are two, sometimes six, eggs of a bluish white, with a circle of violet and brown spots at the larger end.

“This bird is easily caught, and is from the first very tame and affectionate. It can be taught to whistle many airs and songs in a soft, pure, flute-like tone. ‘Bullfinches are usually very tame, sit at command, make many very elegant gestures, moving now the body and now the tail to the right and left, and spreading out the latter like a fan.’

“And now,” said the governess, “what do you think of a seminary of bullfinches?”

The children, of course, thought it very funny, and were anxious to hear all about it.

“‘No school,’ we are told, ‘can be more diligently superintended by its master, and no scholars more effectually trained to their own calling, than a seminary of bullfinches. They are formed first into classes of about six in each, and after having been kept a

longer time than usual without food and confined in a dark room, the tune they are to learn is played over and over again on a little instrument called a bird-organ, the notes of which resemble as nearly as possible those of the bullfinch. For a time, perhaps, the moping birds will sit in silence, not knowing what to make of these proceedings; but after a while they will one by one begin to imitate the notes they hear. As soon as they do this light is admitted into the room, and they are allowed a small supply of food. By degrees the sound of the organ and the circumstance of being fed become so associated that the hungry bird is sure to imitate the notes as soon as it hears them. They are then turned over to the care of boys whose sole business it is to go on with their education, each boy having a separate bird placed under his charge, and he plays away from morning till night—at least, for as many hours as the birds can pay attention, during which time their first teacher, or feeder, goes his regular rounds, scolding or rewarding his feathered scholars by signs and

modes which he has taught them to understand till they become so perfect, and the tune so imprinted on their memory, that they will pipe it for the remainder of their lives. But, though the greater number may be taught their tune, few only—not above five in a hundred, possibly—can be so correctly taught as to pipe in perfect harmony; and these, of course, bring a much higher price than the rest.’

“It is said that singing and satisfaction generally go together in bullfinches, and that a bird attached to any particular individuals in a family will always express delight when they approach, and will greet them with his well-known air, hopping toward them on his perch and practicing all his little coquettish ways. A great musician once owned a piping bullfinch which he had taught to sing ‘God Save the King!’ But he was obliged to leave it for a while and go abroad, giving his favorite into the charge of his sister with strict injunctions to take the greatest care of it. On his return one of his first thoughts was his pet bullfinch; but he was told that the poor

little bird had not been well for a long time, and was now very ill. Full of sorrow, he went to the room where the cage was kept, and, opening the door, put in his hand and spoke to the bird. The little creature remembered his voice, unclosed its eyes, shook its feathers, staggered up, climbed on his finger, piped 'God Save the King!' and fell dead."

"How very sad!" sighed Clara; while Malcolm said that it seemed as if the nicest birds were always dying.

"That is the great trouble with pets," replied Miss Harson: "they so often die when we have become much attached to them; but this never seems to prevent people from trying to keep them. The bullfinch has long been a popular pet because of his endearing little ways and his extreme niceness. Indeed, he is quite a dandy, and employs much of his time in keeping his plumage in order.

"A lover of bullfinches says: 'There are hardly any birds that may be more tame than these; and the delight with which they puff out their feathers, and sidle and

bow and stand up tall, when spoken to, is something charming—*too* amusing almost, sometimes, one wastes so much time talking to them. Poor little Bullie! with her brown satin dress and her velvet head-dress, she does sing such a song! It is very low and extremely long. I wish I could add “musical,” but that certainly is not its most striking feature. Still, Bullie is an affectionate little bird; and if her song is very dull and small, we cannot find fault with anything while she is evidently doing her best to please us, leaving her seed at any time for the pleasure of talking to us. Very tame, too, is she, not to say familiar; solitude is her greatest grievance, and she is heard complaining loudly if even for a moment she is condemned to her own society.’

“This interesting little bird, it seems,” continued Miss Harson, “had to be banished for a while from her mistress’s room—from sickness, perhaps, or some other cause—and it was supposed that she would be quite happy in the society of other birds. The first day or two of her banishment she

cried a great deal ; then she refused to eat, and she died within a week."

"Do the little bullfinches always die?" asked Edith, who did not like this constant dropping off of birds.

"Not before their time, dear," was the reply ; "but captivity is an unnatural state for anything so free as a bird that has only to spread its wings to soar through space, and for this reason caged birds are liable to pine away and die."

"Do you think, Miss Harson," asked Clara, after a pause, "that I ought to let Black-crest fly away to the woods?"

"No, Clara ; your canary was born in a cage, and he would not know what to do with himself if you set him at liberty. Very possibly he might starve, as he is accustomed to have his food provided for him ; or he would be quite likely, after a short flight, to return again to his cage, as he does now when he is set at liberty in the room. But it is a shame to take the happy little creatures flying about in the full enjoyment of their powers and shut them in a cage merely for our amusement."

CHAPTER XII.

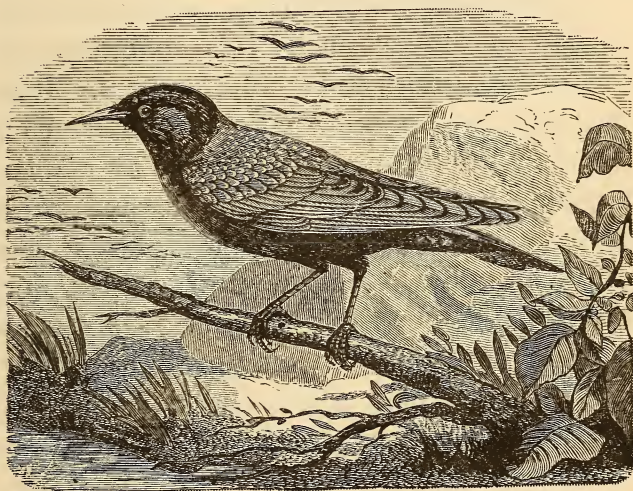
A QUEER CHARACTER: THE STARLING.

“WE have now done with the Fringilla family,” said Miss Harson, “and will next take up some well-known birds that belong to different species. Here is a picture of the stare, or starling—a bird about which we often read, and of which many curious things are written.”

“He looks as speckled as a guinea-hen,” said Malcolm.

“The feathers all seem to be in little light-edged waves,” continued the governess, “and the description says that the whole body is blackish, with a bright purple tinge halfway down the back and breast, with a green lustre on the rest of the body. The pin- and tail-feathers are black speckled with gray; so that the bird has a generally speckled appearance.

“The starling is found in all parts of the Old World; it frequents woods and thickets which are at no great distance from meadows and ploughed fields.* In October it departs southward in large flocks, and does not return till the begin-



THE STARLING (*Sturnus vulgaris*).

ning of March. In its migration it takes shelter by night among reeds and bull-rushes, from which its shrill cry may often

* Our “meadow-lark” is an American representative of this family.

be heard to proceed.' The chief food of this bird is the small meadow grasshopper, but it does not disdain caterpillars, snails and many other insects, and will help itself to grapes, cherries, berries and grain of all kinds. In confinement it may be fed on anything which is not sour.

"The starling's nest is as carelessly built as that of the bullfinch; it is composed of dry leaves, grass, stalks and feathers. It is occupied by the same pair year after year, but they go through with a regular house-cleaning before they take possession after their winter absence. These birds will build in hollow trees, in dovecotes, under the roofs of houses and in wooden boxes and earthen vessels, which are often hung on trees for their accommodation. There are usually seven greenish-gray eggs.

"Some one writes of 'our friend the starling:' 'Close before the window of our scene of observation a well-mown, short-grassed lawn is spread before him: it is his dining-room. There, in the spring, he is allowed to revel, but seldom molested, on the plentiful supply of worms. Close

at hand, within half a stone's throw, stands an ivy-mantled parish church with its mossy gray tower, from the turreted pinnacle of which rises a tall staff crowned by its weathercock ; under the eaves and within the hollows and chinks of the masonry of this tower are his nursery-establishments. On the battlements and projecting tracery of its Gothic ornaments he retires to enjoy himself, looking down on the rural world below ; while at other times a still more elevated party will crowd together on the letters of the weathercock, or, accustomed to its motion, sociably twitter away their chattering song as the vane creaks slowly round with every change of wind.'

"The starling is a bright, happy little bird, very fond of society and a great chatterer. Its notes so much resemble some of the tones of the human voice that when near it is hard to believe that it is not some unseen acquaintance who is speaking. It becomes very tame in captivity, and is as docile and sagacious as a dog. 'It is always lively, understands and obeys every gesture and motion of those with whom it

lives, and, though tottering about with a sober step and a stupid appearance, allows nothing to escape its notice.'

"It learns to repeat words, to whistle airs and to imitate the voices of men and animals and the song of birds. But what the starling does one day it is not at all sure of doing the next day, as it not only forgets what it has learned, but mixes up old and new lessons. There are some exceptions, however, and there will sometimes be found a starling that can utter its own harplike song in the midst of the other occupants of an aviary. It can be taught to imitate our speech. Its style of pronouncing words, if the bird be carefully educated, is said to be far more like human utterance than is the 'talking' of the parrot. Some one mentions a starling that had been taught by a hair-dresser to repeat with wonderful correctness the words, 'Get up, sir!' 'The tone of voice was husky and whispering, and the first time we heard it, from the bird hanging in a dark corner of the shop, we could not imagine whence the words proceeded, and were led to fancy it

might be some idiot boy repeating, as is common in such cases, his favorite phrase; but no sooner did we learn the truth than the correctness of the execution became a matter of comparison and of wonder.

“‘We went one morning with a friend,’ says another, ‘to see a collection of birds belonging to a gentleman in Edinburgh; and among these were some very fine starlings—one, in particular, which cost five guineas. Breakfast was ready before we entered the room. When the bird was produced it flew to its master’s hand and distinctly pronounced, “Good-morning, sir! Breakfast! breakfast!” It afterward hopped to the table, examined every one of the cups, and while thus employed occasionally repeated, “Breakfast! breakfast! Bread and butter for Jack! Pretty Jack! pretty Jack!”’”

The children’s exclamations of wonder and delight were continuous; and little Edith had quite decided to “ask papa for a starling.”

Miss Harson smiled as she continued:

“There was another starling, that belonged to a shopkeeper; and when any

one entered the shop he would say, 'Come in, sir, and take a seat.—George, send for a coach-and-six for pretty Charlie. Be clever, George: I want it immediately.' He would also utter many similar sentences. A naturalist was one day talking to a man on business; and after the speaker had described at some length his plan of proceeding, a voice near by very clearly pronounced the words, 'A thing impossible!' 'Do you hear my impertinent bird?' said he; upon which the little creature repeated its speech.

"The starling is really a cousin of our blackbird, and is distantly related to the *Corvus* family. It has many traits in common with the rooks, jackdaws, etc., with which it associates in large flocks. It is a more handsome bird, though, than any of the species, and its beautiful glossy coat has been compared to a mantle of shot silk garnished with pearls.

"The starlings fly in troops, and during their flight gather into a kind of ring or ball, every individual bird seeming to try to get in the middle. It is no joke to the owner to have one of these troops descend

upon a cherry-orchard; for if not frightened away in season, they will take the whole crop.

“A close observer of these birds says that there is something singularly curious and mysterious in the conduct of starlings previous to their nightly retirement; and he gives an account of what he saw one evening while watching them: ‘About an hour before sunset little flocks of twenty or fifty kept gradually dropping in, their numbers increasing as daylight waned, till one vast flight was formed amounting to thousands, if not almost to millions. Nothing could be more interesting or beautiful than to witness their graceful evolutions. At first they might be seen advancing high in the air like a dark cloud, which in an instant, as if by magic, became almost invisible, the whole body, by some mysterious watchword or signal, changing their course and presenting their wings to view sideways, instead of exposing, as before, their full-expanded spread. Again, in another moment the cloud might be seen descending in a graceful sweep, so as almost to

brush the earth as they glanced along. Then once more they were seen spiring in wide circles on high, till at length, with one simultaneous rush, down they glided with a roaring noise of wing, till the vast mass buried itself, unseen but not unheard, amidst a bed of reeds projecting from a bank near the wood. For no sooner were they perched than every throat seemed to open itself, forming one incessant confusion of tongues.' "

"Isn't there something more about starlings, Miss Harson?" asked the children, who appeared intensely to enjoy the subject.

"I can tell you something about their funny ways when they are building their nests," was the reply. "After a regular account of the starlings' doings from their first appearance in February, the naturalist who has already given us a great deal of information goes on to say that by the middle or last of March detachments of them may be seen prowling busily over the roof, cautiously creeping in and out from under the projecting eaves; and by the end of

the month the regular establishment, amounting to about thirty, has assembled, and the grand work of the year fairly commences.

“From this time all is bustle. Straws and nest-furniture are seen flying through the air in beaks that contrive, nevertheless, to announce their comings and goings by particular harsh or low muttering cries, according as they think they are watched or not. They are cunning birds, and discover in an instant whether a passer-by has an eye to their movements, perfectly aware whether he is following his own business or theirs. If he steps onward without troubling himself about them, they go in and out with perfect unconcern; but if a glance of curiosity or of observation is directed to their motions, they are all upon the alert. The bearer of a tuft to the nest wheels to the right-about, and, perching on the naked upper twig of a small beech tree or the projecting point of a gable-end, sits there uttering a particular note which seems to give, as well as words can do, intimation to a mate to be on its guard, as a spy is at hand. If the weather is tolerably favor-

able, everything goes on smoothly and regularly; but—and we have in the journal of our starlings' proceedings many such instances on record—should a severe and sudden change occur, a violent storm of snow or a continuance of chilling winds, all operations are suspended. Not only are the eaves and the half-built nests deserted, but even the tower itself—battlements, weathercock and all—till a return of fine weather, when the starlings too return, and the work again proceeds.”

The starlings were quite reluctantly given up, but Miss Harson comforted her little audience with the assurance that there were still left many birds which they would find equally interesting.

CHAPTER XIII.

THE QUEEN OF SONG: THE NIGHTINGALE.

“WE shall finish our list of British birds,” said Miss Harson, “with one that, being the ‘Queen of Song,’ I have kept until the last.”

“I know,” said Malcolm: “it is the nightingale.”

“Yes,” continued his governess, “and here you see her—a gracefully-shaped little bird about the size of a house-sparrow; but, ‘were it prized only for its plumage, it would hardly deserve a place among the inmates of the aviary.’ The prevailing color of the nightingale is grayish-brown, the breast and all the under-parts white. ‘It is found throughout Europe, as far north as the middle of Sweden; in all Asia except the arctic regions of Siberia; and even in Egypt, on the banks of the

Nile. It frequents overgrown, shady and not very cold places, whether woods, groves, gardens or hedges.'

"All over the world, it is said, from Sweden to Hindustan, the nightingale's song is essentially the same, though some species are superior to others both in the perfection of their song and in the quality of their voice. One utters its notes with a slow and sweet mournfulness; the tones of another are peculiarly clear and sonorous; a third introduces into its song original passages of its own; and a fourth surpasses all the rest in the silvery quality of its voice. Occasionally may be found birds which seem to unite all these excellences, and these are generally from the first brood of the year; they have also been reared in some locality where nightingales have abounded, and have learned to unite in their song the characteristic beauties of each of their tutors.

"On seeing the nightingale after hearing it sing, the listener might well exclaim,

" ' I could not think so *small* a bird
Could sing so sweet a song,'

for the strength of its notes is astonishing. Variety and sweetness also combine to



THE NIGHTINGALE (*Philomela luscinia*).

form the ravishing harmony which places this little bird at the very head of all feathered warblers. Izaak Walton, the famous old angler, calls nightingales ‘the chiefest of the little nimble musicians of the air that warble forth their curious ditties with which Nature has furnished them to the shame of Art.’

“Many people suppose that the nightin-

gale never sings until the sun has set, and that he is the only songster of the night. He is said, however, to sing during the day as sweetly and powerfully as at night; but, owing to the general chorus of singing-birds, his efforts are less noticed. It is also said that some nightingales always sing in the middle of the night.

“But there are other feathered musicians of the night. ‘The wood-lark will to a very late hour pour forth its rich notes, flying in circles round the female when sitting on her nest. The sky-lark, too, may frequently be heard till near midnight high in the air, soaring as if in the brightness of a summer’s morning. The warblings of a thrush have been heard long after dark, and we have been awakened at two in the morning by its sweet serenade.’

“The song of the nightingale does not last very long—for about three months only—and it is not unvaryingly good even during that short period. When the birds first arrive from their southern quarters—for they do not spend their winters at the north—their song is frequent and at its

very best ; but by the middle of summer it ceases altogether, and in the woods only the twittering of the young birds is heard as they try to imitate their father's song. Mamma Nightingale never sings at all, although the singer is always spoken of as 'she.' In a cage the nightingale will sing from November till April.

“‘Proud as they may be of their own skill,’ says one, ‘they are not insensible to the harmony of musical instruments. The German hymn, played upon a flute very softly, near a bush in which there was a nest, soon attracted the attention of the birds. Scarcely was the air finished than the cock was heard to chirp ; and when the tune was played a second time, it was seen to hop through the bushes with great quickness toward the place where the player stood, at the same time making a sort of sub-warbling, which it soon changed into its usual beautiful and lengthened song.’

“A nightingale is roused by any musical sound ; but, instead of listening in silence, it will always strive with its rivals and try

by every possible exertion to outsing noise of whatever kind. Some have even been known to drop dead after an overstrain of this sort; and of one it is related that whenever another cage-bird near it began to sing it kept up an angry twittering until the offender was surprised or frightened into silence.

"I wish I had a nightingale," said Malcolm, "that could sing to a flute. It would be great fun."

"But he'd get angry at Black-crest—wouldn't he, Miss Harson?—and try to make him stop singing. I shouldn't like that."

"I doubt very much if he would succeed," replied the governess, laughing, "judging from the strength of lung displayed by Master Canary when I have been talking. But nightingales are not to be had for the wishing. It must be an amusing bird to watch, for a description of the little warbler says: 'He maintains a very erect posture, and there is something very peculiar in his hopping gait. After having made a succession of hops, he stands still, moves his

wings, elevates his tail and slightly expands it, nods his head once or twice, and then hops onward again. If anything attracts his attention, he generally looks at it with only one eye; if he catches sight of an insect, he does indeed leap quickly to the spot, yet does not seize it greedily like other birds, but stands over it a moment as if in consideration. He has in general a thoughtful air, though it must be confessed he easily falls into the traps and snares laid for him—as is the case with all birds that are unfamiliar with men—though, if one is caught, he is prudent enough for ever after. He has been called, with just cause, an inquisitive bird, because he always hastens to examine any place on the ground which has been scratched up or disturbed. But this peculiarity—which he shares with other birds of the same genus—is the result of instinct, which teaches him that in such situations he will find the insects which are his favorite food; while, on the contrary, he takes no notice of many things which are put before him, however strange or peculiar they may be.'

“The nightingale builds its nest in groves or gardens, or in some thick bush or heaps of sticks, or even on the ground if the spot is surrounded with brushwood or with long grass. It is carelessly built, of small dry twigs and leaves, with an inner layer of grass-stalks and roots, and sometimes it is lined with hair. There are five or six greenish-brown eggs.

“A caged nightingale,” continued Miss Harson, “even built a nest in a little work-basket purposely put with it.”

“Oh,” exclaimed Clara, impulsively, “how cunning! I wonder if Black-crest—”

But she stopped suddenly, for she saw that Malcolm was laughing at her; and then she remembered that nest-building was not to be expected of the canary under any circumstances.

“The basket-nest did not flourish,” added their governess, “for Mr. Nightingale would not bring the little mother anything to eat while she sat on her eggs; and finally she got very hungry and indignant, and threw the eggs out and broke them.”

“What a shame!” cried the children;

and it seemed difficult to believe that such gentle-looking little birds could behave so badly as had this papa and mamma nightingale.

“The nightingale,” continued Miss Harson, “is not a European bird only, but it is found also in the far East. Among the roses of Persia it

“ ‘ on a bloomy spray
Warbles at eve when all the woods are still,
In russet brown bedight.’

It is there called the ‘bulbul,’ and seems even more at home than in England. It is said to come and go with the roses; and there is a very pretty idea among Oriental poets of the love of the nightingale for the rose. They say that ‘you may place a hundred handfuls of fragrant herbs and flowers before the nightingale, yet he wishes not in his constant heart for more than the sweet breath of his beloved rose.’

“These birds are frequently caught by imitating their song. There is a story of a man who could do this so well that he used to hide himself in a bush in a public gar-

den in London and warble like a nightingale to draw custom. In answer to all inquiries, the proprietor would say, '*Hear 'em, sir? Why, you're sure to hear 'em: we keeps a nightingale.*'

"The nightingale is off for a warmer climate as soon as the summer heats are past; and a writer who has watched for his return to England says: 'He left us in August, and has been away between eight and nine months. What he must have seen and heard in his long vacation! While the snow froze on my window, and his neighbor the robin sat piping on that sparkling bough, where was he? Probably enjoying a run among the Greek isles. I have read of a naturalist who understood the bird-language: why did he not give lessons? I should like to ask this nightingale a few questions about his travels—such as whether he compared the dark sea streaked with deepest purple with our lake; marble pillars of ruined temples on green hillsides with gables and porches of old Berkshire farms; or dim islands—Cos and Ithaca—glimmering through a cloud-curtain of sil-

ver with our country towns just visible in the early dawn. Perhaps he preferred a town in Egypt, long a favorite winter home of his kindred. What food for "those bright eyes" in the land of sphinxes and of mummies! What a stare at the pyramids and what a longing, lingering look at the Rosetta!

"' But, O unmindful nightingale! a broader, brighter Eye was bent over *thee*—the Eye that never slumbers nor sleeps—as thou screenedst thyself in the orange-branches. If even young ravens that call on our Father are fed from his hands, and the sparrow, sitting alone on the house-top, does not fall to the ground unobserved or uncared for, surely thou art ever seen and watched in the rose-gardens of the East and the green coppices of English woods. Dear pilgrim of music and beauty, I think thou art God's missionary, publishing abroad his wonders and love among the trees, most eloquent when the world is stillest.' "

Miss Harson found that her little flock fully appreciated these beautiful thoughts about the nightingale's travels, and that

they were quite prepared to listen as long as she felt disposed to read.

“Here is a little poem,” said she, “that I found to-day, and thought pretty; and this will end our talk about the nightingale :

“ ‘ Prize thou the nightingale,
Who soothes thee with his tale
And wakes the woods around;
A singing feather he, a winged and wandering sound,

“ ‘ Whose tender caroling
Sets all ears listening
Unto that living lyre
Whence flow the airy notes his ecstasies inspire;

“ ‘ Whose shrill, capricious song
Breathes like a flute along
With many a careless tune—
Music of thousand tongues formed by one tongue alone.

“ ‘ O charming creature rare!
Can aught with thee compare?
Thou art all song; thy breast
Thrills for one month of the year—is tranquil all the rest.

“ ‘ Thee wondrous we may call:
Most wondrous this of all—
That such a tiny throat
Should make so loud a sound and pour so loud a note.’ ”

CHAPTER XIV.

A BAD NAME: THE NIGHT-JAR.

“**W**HAT a queer mouth for a bird!” exclaimed Malcolm when Miss Harson invited her pupils to look at a picture of the goat-sucker or fern-owl. “It is all crooked, and seems to have a fringe around it.”

“It is certainly very wide open,” was the reply, “and *is* somewhat strangely formed. ‘Such a prodigious opening as it is,’ says a naturalist, ‘with a fringe of strong bristles on either side of the nostrils, the use of which is this—that as it flies along, if a moth crosses the pathway of these widely-opened jaws, the bristles fether the insect’s wings and help to imprison it beyond the power of escape.’”

“This bird really belongs to the swallow tribe, though larger than a swallow, being

over ten inches long. Its plumage is of an ash-gray color spotted and barred with black, brown and reddish-brown, which gives it a curiously-mottled appearance. It is found in many parts of Europe and in warm regions, particularly in South America. It is known under a great many different names, and the strange one of 'goat-sucker' was given to it from an old superstition. Ancient naturalists said that the bird was a night-robber who found his way into the goat-pens and sucked the goats, poisoning them so that they were made blind and their udders wasted away. It is very difficult to overcome a prejudice like this, but the poor goat-sucker has been proved to be perfectly inoffensive and not to deserve this name at all. 'Fern-owl' is a much prettier name, and comes from the fact of the bird's being frequently met with on heather or in wild places abounding with fern.

"Another of its names is 'wheeler' or 'night-jar,' and this is explained in this way: 'The silence of the evening or midnight walk in June is occasionally broken

by a deep whirring noise which seemingly proceeds from the lower boughs of a tree, a hedge or paling. Having in it nothing of a chirp or warble or whistle, it is unlike the note of a bird, or indeed any natural sound, but most resembles the humming of



THE NIGHT-JAR OR GOAT-SUCKER (*Caprimulgus Europæus*).

a wheel in rapid evolution. It seems to proceed from different directions, as the bird turns its head from side to side in making it.'

"In the dusk of the evening the night-jar may commonly be seen hawking for moths and beetles, after the manner of the

swallow tribe, only that its flight is less rapid and direct :

“ ‘ The burring dor-hawk round and round is wheeling :
That solitary bird
Is all that can be heard
In silence deeper far than deepest noon.’ ”

“ Sometimes it is seen, in the bright glare of a summer afternoon, in company with swifts and swallows ; but most frequently it spends the day resting either on the ground among heath or ferns or in the branch of a tree, always crouching close down upon it.

“ An English naturalist thinks that these birds should be called ‘ moth-hawk,’ because they feed almost entirely on those soft-winged insects, which they catch up in their flight however dark it may be. ‘ To human beings,’ he says, ‘ who at dusk can scarcely trace a swift-flying moth as it glances by, it is inconceivable how this bird can contrive to make its constant meals on such precarious prey. Nature, however, has amply provided it with never-failing means of feasting to its satisfaction. In the first

place, its eye is large, full and clear, like the owl's, and so thin and transparent is the membrane separating it from the base of the upper mandible that as the bird flies, when in search of food, with its mouth open, it is thought that it is enabled thereby to keep a lookout forward, as well as on either side, through the thin, bony membrane. At all events, without this odd addition to great powers of vision, a skull more than half filled up with eyesight must enable the possessor to see more clearly in the dark than we can conceive possible.'

"Another help to this bird in catching moths is a kind of glutinous liquid that comes from the upper part of the bill and makes it impossible for small insects to get away, as they are stuck as fast as with mucilage. A number of them can be taken and swallowed together in this way; and, what is still stranger, they often live after they are swallowed. Some one who had shot a goat-sucker was surprised to see a moth come out of its mouth and fly away; and the next morning, on opening the bird's crop, there were found several other

moths that had lived all night in this strange prison and seemed glad to be released."

"I should say they would be!" commented Malcolm. "If I were a moth, I'd keep clear of goat-suckers."

"That is not so easy," was the reply, "as the bird seems to be made purposely to catch such creatures, and so to protect vegetation from destruction by worms and caterpillars. Besides its wonderful eyes and mouth, it has a foot specially fitted for grappling its game. The hind claw, although remarkably small, is reversible—that is, it can turn forward and act in concert with the other three, which is a great convenience in catching such nimble things as moths; and, besides this, the middle claw is toothed, to prevent the escape of active prey. Is it not wonderful that such careful provision should be made for the success of a bird?"

"Goat-suckers are said to use this toothed claw to carry off their eggs when disturbed, and some naturalists declare that they have seen them flying with the eggs in their claws. 'In the twilight, when the bird is

at work, it flits about, hovering now over one spot, then over another, occasionally dropping or tumbling over as if shot. This is the moment when, having seized a moth, the bird reaches it to its mouth and loses its balance ; when, again rising, it glides away like a ghost, till lost in shade.'

"This bird makes no nest, but lays its eggs on the bare ground or on some loose crag without any seeming care whatever. Two beautiful eggs are sometimes found among the dry herbage of the common.

"The Indians of South America, where the goat-suckers abound, use the young birds to make oil. A famous traveler who visited a dark chasm in the rocks called the 'Cavern of Guacharo,' where the goat-suckers make their nests, gives a very interesting account of his experience. He says: 'A frightful noise made by these birds issued from the dark recesses of the cavern; their shrill and piercing tones reverberated from the arched roofs and were re-echoed from the depths of the cave. The Indians, by fixing torches to the end of a long pole, pointed out their

nests arranged in funnel-shaped holes, with which the whole roof of the grotto was riddled.' As the travelers advanced the noise increased, the flare of the torches still more alarming the birds. When it ceased for a few minutes, distinct moans were heard from other remote branches of the cavern—the alternate responses of other flocks of these birds.

"The Indians every year, about midsummer, descend into the cave furnished with poles for the purpose of destroying the nests. At this time many thousands of birds are killed; and the old ones, as if to protect their broods, hover over the heads of the Indians, uttering the most dreadful shrieks. The young that fall to the ground are immediately ripped open to procure the fat with which they are then loaded.

"At this period—which is commonly termed the 'oil-harvest'—the Indians construct little habitations of palm-leaves close to the opening, and even in the mouth, of the cavern. Here the grease of the young birds just killed is melted over a fire of dry sticks and run into pots of white clay.

This grease—known by the name of ‘guacharo butter or oil’—is semi-liquid, transparent and without smell, and so pure that it may be kept a twelvemonth without becoming rancid.”

“Is that all the butter the poor people have?” asked Clara, who did not think she would like it on her bread.

“I think it is,” replied Miss Harson, “and they are probably glad to get it. Travelers who have eaten it say that it never has a disagreeable taste or smell. So you see that, instead of goatsuckers stealing milk, they actually supply people with butter.”

CHAPTER XV.

A MEMBER OF THE SCRAPER FAMILY: THE PHEASANT.

“OH how beautiful!” exclaimed the children, gazing at the wonderfully-tinted plumage of a golden pheasant; and Malcolm asked,

“Isn’t that a bird of paradise, Miss Harson?”

“No,” was the reply, “but it is nearly as handsome a bird, and came originally from as great a distance, being named from its home on the river Phasis, in Asia Minor. It belongs to the gallinaceous family, or scrapers, and is a cousin of the chicken, turkey, peacock, and so forth. Next to the peacock, it is said, pheasants are among the most beautiful of birds, as well for the vivid color of their plumes as for their happy mixtures and varieties. It is far beyond the power of the pencil to draw any-



COMMON PHEASANT (*Phasianus Colchicus*).

thing so glossy, so bright, or with points so finely blending into one another.

“We are told that when Cræsus, king of Lydia, was seated on his throne adorned with royal magnificence and all the barbarous pomp of Eastern splendor, he asked Solon if he had ever beheld anything so fine. The Greek philosopher, in no way moved by the objects before him, or perhaps taking a pride in his rough simplicity, replied that after having seen the beautiful plumage of the pheasant he could be astonished at no other finery.

“In looking at the picture,” continued Miss Harson, “you will see that the feathers of the head are blackish in front, mixed with shining purple; while on the top and upper part of the neck they are dark-green and shine like silk. Sometimes the top of the head is of a shining blue, and the head itself, as well as the upper part of the neck, appears sometimes blue and sometimes green. The feathers of the breast, the shoulders, the middle of the back and the sides under the wings have a blackish ground, with edges tinged of an exquisite

color, which appears sometimes black and sometimes purple, according to the different lights in which it is placed. The tail is about eighteen inches long.

“What a lordly creature a pheasant looks moving along the grassy glade of a wood, now erecting his head as if to listen, while perchance a sunbeam falls upon his burnished neck, then stooping to pick up a fallen acorn, the long plumes of his tail swaying in the wind like silken pennons, or, alarmed by the rustling of the long reeds, plunging among the underwood or flapping his way to the ivied arm of a tree! How beautiful appears a flock of these birds feeding upon the wildwood-fruits in some path seldom trodden by any foot saving their own! What terrible havoc the murderous gun makes of their feathers, scattering their gold and crimson and purple plumes upon the wind and drawing down the bright scarlet rim that encircles the deep shining eyes which the filmy darkness covers!

“The sound of their voices, too, calling to each other from the distant thickets, har-

monizes well with the silence of the scene. Then to come upon them unawares when they are squatting among the tangled grass and plants, and see them spring up and with a loud noise *whir* through the woven branches to some more secret covert, is a beautiful and striking sight, especially in the month of October, when every motion of their strong wings scatters a shower of golden leaves to the ground.' ”

“Why do people shoot the pretty pheasants ?” asked Clara. “Do they want their feathers ?”

“Not so much their feathers, dear, as their flesh,” was the reply. “The pheasant is what is called a game-bird, and is considered a great dainty ; in old times it was thought almost to cure diseases. At a great feast which was given about the middle of the fifteenth century two hundred pheasants were served up, and at the luxurious repasts of the ancient Romans this bird was very highly esteemed on account of its novelty and its costliness.

“It is only a half-domesticated bird, and loves the shade of woods with a thick un-

dergrowth of long, tangled grass and thorny brakes and ferny hollows, although it may be found in the thick hedgerows and corn-fields and clover-patches. But its home is not there: it wants a wild, free, sylvan tract where it may at least fancy itself secure from man and his misdoings.

“All among the leafy woodlands,
When the trees have donned their richest
Garniture, and fruitful autumn
Maketh all things ripe and golden—
Maketh all things rich and mellow—
There the pheasant, with a splendid
Dress befitting such a season,
Glides through ferny brakes and thickets,
Crouches in the dells and dingles
'Mid the purple bells of foxgloves,
'Mid the grasses tall and feathery,
Hiding from keen-scented pointers :
Foolish bird ! all vainly hiding !”

“Pheasants have been considered—and with some reason—foolish birds easily taken by every snare ; but they were not only highly esteemed in ancient times, but viewed with a sort of superstitious respect—so much so that by the heathen Romans those who first served them up at entertainments were deemed guilty of a sort of impiety to

their idol-gods; and when they were afterward introduced as food, they were never used even by the emperors, except on the most solemn occasions.

“The golden pheasant of China is a particularly beautiful bird. It is smaller than the common pheasant, and its general color is crimson; but the head has a magnificent yellow crest which looks like silk. The back is also yellow, and in the other parts blue and brown are mingled.

“The Argus pheasant, which is still handsomer, is also a native of China. Its feathers are marked with eyes like those in the peacock’s train, and its colors are a changeable blue, dull orange and dusky brown. It is about the size of a turkey, and the two middle feathers of the tail are three feet long.

“There is also a beautiful Indian pheasant, rather larger than a common fowl. This one has an erect crest of eighteen feathers, the longest of which measure three inches and a half. The feathers of the head and throat are green bronze; the middle of the neck, purple with a copper

gloss. The back and the wings are purple ; the under-part, black with a green gloss ; the tail, cinnamon-brown.

“ But all these beautiful dresses are worn only by the male bird. ‘ The little brown hen ’ of the pheasant hovers securely over her slightly-made nest, her want of beauty being her chief protection. In the nest are ten or twelve eggs of a plain olive-color. When the little brood come forth, they go rolling about like balls of yellow down after their clucking and exulting mother, who leads them through

“ ‘ Many a lane, and many an alley green,
Dingle and bosky dell of the wildwood,
And many a bosky bourn from side to side.’

“ ‘ There they go, little round, rollicking things, chattering and twittering all day long, carefully fed and watched by their assiduous mother, who covers them with her wings at night and defends them as best she can against the damps and dews, and often less successfully against furred and feathered enemies—the weasel, the polecat, the skulking fox and the ghost-

like owl, which, in lieu of a mouse-supper, will, if he has a chance, take a plump young pheasant or partridge, or any other small game of the kind.' ”

“Don't they look like little chickens, Miss Harson?” asked Edith, who was very much taken with the description of the baby-pheasants.

“Very much like them, dear,” was the reply ; “they belong to the same family, and the wee chicks, too, often look like ‘little balls of yellow down.’ And now, with these pretty verses about the home of the British pheasant, we shall leave him, to attend to some of his relations :

“ ‘ The stockdove builds in the old oak wood ;
The rook in the elm tree rears her brood ;
The owl in a ruin doth hoot and stare ;
The mavis and merle build everywhere.
But not for these will we go to day :
'Tis the pheasant that lures us hence away—
The beautiful pheasant, that loves to be
Where the young green birches are waving free.

“ ‘ Away to the woods with the silvery rind
And the emerald tresses afloat in the wind !
For 'tis joy to go to those sylvan bowers
When summer is rich with leaves and flowers,
And to see, 'mid the growth of all lovely things,
The joyous pheasant unfold his wings,

And then cower down, as if to screen
His gorgeous purple, gold and green.

“ ‘O beautiful bird, in thy stately pride
Thou wast made in a waste of flowers to hide,
And to fling to the sun the glorious hues
Of thy rainbow gold, thy greens and blues !
Yes, beautiful pheasant, the birch-wood bowers,
Rich, many-formed leaves, bright-tinted flowers,
Broad masses of shade and sunshine free,
In thy gorgeous beauty are meet for thee.’ ”

CHAPTER XVI.

MORE OF THE SCRAPERS: THE PEACOCK, THE TURKEY AND THE QUAIL.

“**I** KNOW that bird,” said Malcolm, proudly.

“And I!” “And I!” exclaimed Clara and little Edith.

“Yes,” replied Miss Harson, “it is easy to tell the peacock, with his magnificent train, of which he is so proud, but not so easy to believe that he belongs to the poultry, or scraper, family. These beautiful birds were first brought from the East Indies; and they are still found in a wild state in India and in the islands of Java and Ceylon. The Bible mentions them among the things which Solomon had brought to him from the East when ‘once in three years came the ships of Tarshish, bringing gold and silver, ivory, and apes,

and peacocks.* They were probably brought from Southern India or Ceylon.

“The glory of this magnificent bird is in



THE PEACOCK (*Pavo cristatus*).

its train, which rises just above the tail, and when erected forms a fan of the most resplendent hues. The two middle feathers are sometimes four feet and a half long, while the others gradually diminish on each side. The ends of the feathers are broad and decorated with what is called ‘the eye.’ The real tail of the peacock is of short,

* 1 Kings x. 22; 2 Chron. ix. 21.

stiff brown feathers, which serve as a support to the train.

“When he is pleased and satisfied, the bird erects his train and displays all the majesty of his beauty; all his movements are full of dignity; his head and neck bend nobly back; his pace is slow and solemn; and he frequently turns slowly and gracefully round, as if to catch the sunbeams in every direction and produce new colors of inconceivable richness and beauty, accompanied, at the same time, with a thrumming of his wings on the ground. His voice is very harsh and disagreeable. The peacock’s beautiful plumes are shed every year; and while this is going on he seems very much mortified and hides himself from view.”

“Aren’t peacocks very vain?” asked Clara.

“That is what people say,” was the reply, “and their actions certainly look like it. ‘As vain as a peacock’ and ‘As proud as a peacock’ are common expressions; but we must not forget that his elegant dress is given to him directly by the Crea-

tor and is his noblest possession; whilst God looks for something higher in those to whom he has given reason and mortal souls. A peacock is meant to be a peacock and to show his feathers, but it is not so pleasant when girls make peacocks of themselves.

“Peacocks’ feathers were at one time much worn with gay dresses; and one of the early kings of France had a splendid mantle embroidered with these feathers sent to him by the pope. They were also made into a crown by noble ladies to decorate their favorite troubadours, or minstrels. The ‘eyes’ in the feathers were meant to express that the attention of the whole world was fixed on them. Queen Elizabeth of England had her picture taken in a gorgeous robe covered with peacock’s eyes.”

“Don’t people cook and eat peacocks, Miss Harson?” asked Malcolm.

“Not often now, as they are valued more for beauty than for food. But their flesh is good—rather more dry than that of the turkey, but white and agreeable. In former

times peacocks were often served up at the tables of the great—not to be eaten, but only to be seen. To prepare them for this display, the skin was first taken off and the body filled with warm spices; then the skin was put on again, with all the beautiful plumage in perfect order. A bird thus stuffed would often last for many years. At wedding-entertainments the peacock's bill and throat were often filled with cotton and camphor, which were set on fire to amuse the company.

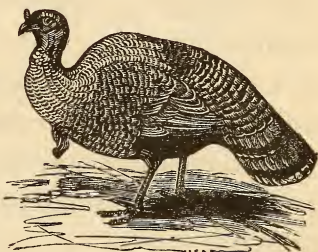
“Like other birds of the poultry kind, the peacock feeds upon grain and seeds. There is, however, scarcely any food that it will not at times covet and pursue, often much to the annoyance of the gardener.

“The pea-hen has neither crest nor train, and looks very plain beside her showy partner. She lays about five or six eggs when tame, but in their native forests the eggs of these birds are said to be very numerous.”

The children would have liked to hear more about peacocks, but Miss Harson assured them that she had given them all

the information she could find, as these birds were very much like some people who had little besides their looks to recommend them.

“The next ‘scraper,’” continued the governess, “is the turkey, a bird with which we are pretty well acquainted—in a cooked state, at least. But what we shall learn is chiefly about the wild turkey, from which our tame turkeys were



THE TURKEY.

originally descended. This bird is a native of the New World; it abounded in North America when Europeans came here. It has been driven farther and farther to the west as population has advanced.

“In their native woods turkeys are much larger than when in a state of domestic captivity. They are more beautiful, too, their feathers being a dark gray bordered at the edges with a bright gold color.

“‘If the common cock,’ it is said, ‘is the most useful bird in our poultry-yard, the

turkey is the most remarkable, as well for the beauty of the tail as for the singular appearance of the head, and for those habits which are almost peculiar to itself.' The domestic bird appears to be stupid, vain and quarrelsome; and every one knows how angry a turkey-cock will get at the sight of anything red. He is a great bully, too, and seems to delight in frightening children and any animal that will run from him; but, like other bullies, he is weak and cowardly when boldly faced even by smaller animals.

"Some one writes of the wild turkeys: 'Though, on the whole, friendly and sociable birds, and fond of traveling together in flocks, a good deal of severe discipline is exercised by the old birds, particularly the males, who seem to rule over the juniors with a very strong hand. The young males—called 'gobblers'—are compelled to live by themselves; for if they venture to approach their seniors, they are sure of being severely punished, and many are killed on the spot by repeated blows on the skull.

" 'They frequently meet with great diffi-

culties in their journeyings in consequence of rivers stopping their progress. In this case they seem to hold a council; the old males strut about and gobble loudly, while the hens and the young males spread out their tails and make the most of their figures. At last, as if by common consent, they mount the highest trees; from whence, at a particular signal from a leader, away they launch themselves. If, as is often the case, the river is wide, these short-winged, heavy-bodied travelers perish in great numbers. The strong, the old and the healthy generally accomplish their object; while the weak and the tender, falling short, are hurried down the stream. But they do not in this perilous predicament lose their presence of mind; for, spreading out their tails as a sail, they close their wings, stretch out their necks and strike out boldly for the shore.'

"Female turkeys lay from fifteen to twenty eggs and are particularly devoted mothers. They really seem to enjoy setting, and are often employed to hatch the eggs of other poultry. There is a funny

story of a turkey-cock who undertook to help his mate in this matter, taking some of the eggs from under her and carefully covering them with his own body. The poultry-woman, not thinking the eggs very safe, put them back again under the hen, but as soon as the cock had a chance he carried them off as before. It was then concluded to let him have his own way just to see what he would do, and a nest was made for him with as many eggs in it as his body would cover. The turkey-cock seemed to be very much pleased with this arrangement, and sat very patiently on the eggs. Indeed, he was so devoted to his novel employment that he scarcely took time to go in search of food. But when twenty-eight young ones appeared, and he saw so many little animals pecking around him and requiring his constant care, he was a very much puzzled turkey, and did not seem to know what to make of it. It was not considered safe to leave them to his tender mercies, for fear of his forgetting them or treading on them; so they were given to the care of an experienced hen.

“There is in Australia a species of wild turkey that has a curious way of hatching its eggs. A nest is made by collecting a mass of fallen leaves into quite a pile, and in the middle of this the eggs are deposited. The leaves of the trees found in that country are full of moisture, and when collected in a mass they soon ferment and heat. The bird is taught by Providence when the heat has continued long enough to hatch the eggs; and, pulling the heap to pieces, the old ones release the brood and lead them off to the woods or the plains.

“The horned-turkey of Bengal is a singular-looking creature. It is not quite so large as the ordinary turkey, and the loose flap which hangs from its throat is blue instead of red. But the strangest part of it is the fleshy, callous substance, of a blue color, which rises like a horn behind each eye and makes it look like a horned animal. Other wild turkeys are found in South America, especially in Brazil and Guiana. These are crested, and have much more splendid plumage than those in milder climates.”

“Oh what pretty birds!” exclaimed the children over a group of plump partridges. “Are these ‘scrapers’ too, Miss Harson?”

“Yes, these are scrapers too, but this particular species is also called *Perdex*, or ‘perdecine.’ The partridges are pretty generally distributed over the world, but are found mostly in warm and temperate climates. They live on vegetable substances, such as seeds, buds and the herbaceous parts of plants. They are of timid and retiring habits, have a strong whirring flight, and run with great speed when obliged to leave the covert which they prefer.

“But the bird is found in frozen regions as well as under the equator, and it is wonderful to see how it is adapted to the nature of the climate in which it resides. In Greenland the partridge is brown in summer; but when icy winter begins to reign, it changes its brown dress for a snow-white mantle lined with down. ‘On the shores of Hudson’s Bay, in the winter season, partridges may be seen by thousands feeding on the willow-tops peeping from the surface of

the snow. They are provided with a plumage well calculated for the severe weather to which they are exposed, each feather being in a manner doubled, so as to give additional warmth.' These Arctic partridges, having no trees in which to shelter themselves and to roost, burrow under the snow; they will dive under it as a duck dives under water, and rise at some distance from the spot where they disappeared. The Indians catch them in traps, and live upon them through their long winter.

"The partridge is very difficult to tame, on account of its exceeding shyness; but it has been known occasionally to attach itself to human beings. An account is given of one that was reared in a clergyman's family: it became so tame that it would go into the parlor at breakfast and at other times, and would often stretch itself before the fire and seem to enjoy the heat like a house-dog. The dogs of the family never disturbed it, but a strange cat one day came in and killed it.

"A partridge in Scotland formed a singular friendship with a flock of wild turkeys.

These birds never came into the poultry-yard, but roosted in the trees and lived on anything they could pick up, although tame enough to come about the house to be fed when the ground was covered with frost and snow. A full-grown partridge suddenly appeared among this flock of turkeys, and remained with them during the whole summer, autumn and winter. At night he slept under the trees in which they roosted; in the day he fed with them, and was not in the least frightened or disturbed by people walking among them. He took great liberties with the old turkey-cock. When he saw him going to pick up a worm or a seed, he used to run under him between his legs and snatch it out of his mouth, the turkey-cock never resenting it. Early in the spring he left them, but in the beginning of autumn he rejoined his old friends and continued with them until the next spring, when he disappeared and did not return, having probably been killed.

“The partridge usually makes its nest in grain-fields, where, undisturbed in the thick

forest of tall stalks, it rears its brood. Sometimes, like most other birds, it chooses odd places for a nursery, and one was made on top of a haystack, where a promising family was hatched and carried off safely.

“‘The manners of the partridge in most circumstances,’ writes a naturalist, ‘resemble those of poultry in general, but their cunning and instinct seem superior to those of the larger kinds. Perhaps, as they live in the very neighborhood of their enemies, they have more frequent occasion to put their little arts in practice, and learn by habit the means of evasion or safety. The affection of the female for her young is particularly strong and lively, and she is greatly assisted in the care of rearing them by her mate ; they lead them out in common, call them together, point out to them their proper food, and assist them in finding it by scratching the ground with their feet. They frequently sit close by each other, covering their young with their wings like the hen ; and when they are compelled to move, the male employs many interesting stratagems, such as fluttering along the

ground, hanging his wings and feigning to be wounded, in order to attract the pursuit of the enemy and afford to the female an opportunity to escape with her infant brood.'

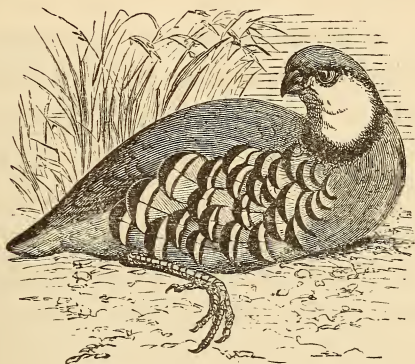
"Partridges will often fight desperately to defend their young against the attacks of other birds. That general thief the carrion-crow has been attacked by a pair of them and obliged to surrender the nice young fledgling which he had seized for the purpose of making a feast; and when a kite has been hovering over a brood of young partridges, the parents have been known to fly up, screaming and fighting with all their might for the purpose of beating off the assailant.

"' Ah ! take thy heed, nor on her nest
The partridge, ill-secured, molest.
Deep in the grass behold her sit,
Reluctant from her couch to flit,
Though the stout mower's whistling blade,
Incautious, her abode invade,
And threaten, 'mid the falling heap,
Away herself and brood to sweep.' "

"Do you remember any one in the Bible likening himself to a partridge?" asked Miss Harson.

After a pause Malcolm brightened up and exclaimed:

“Yes, yes! It was David. When that wicked Saul was chasing him and trying to



THE PARTRIDGE.

kill him, David said that he was hunted like a partridge on the mountains.”

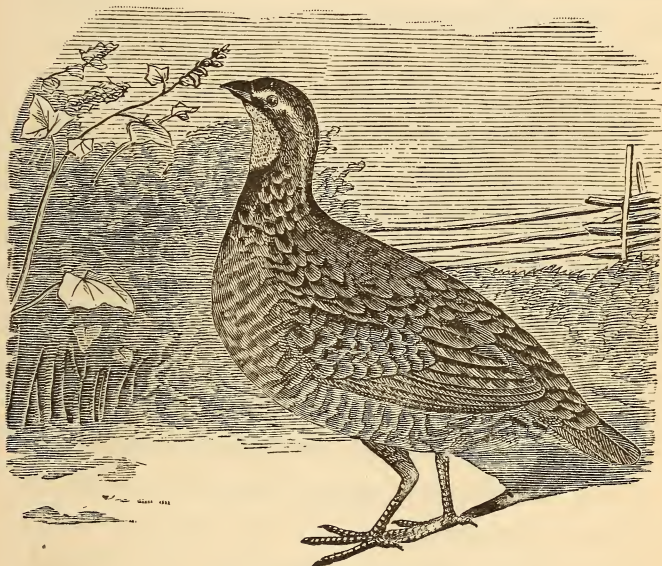
“Then there ought to be partridges in Palestine, and there are—a fine, large species called the Greek partridge, which is to-day run down by men with clubs as poor David was chased by Saul and his soldiers.”

“Is that all for to-night, Miss Harson?” was asked, rather wistfully in spite of the long talk they had had.

“Not quite,” was the smiling reply. “We

have something to learn about the quail, and it will not do to separate such near relations. This is a pretty little bird not much larger than the lark, but it resembles the partridge so closely in shape and in the color of its plumage that it has often been thought by naturalists to be the same bird. The flesh of the quail is particularly delicate, and we read in the Holy Scriptures how quails supplied the Israelites with food when they were journeying in the wilderness. In the eleventh chapter of Numbers, thirty-first and thirty-second verses, it is written: 'And there went forth a wind from the Lord, and brought quails from the sea, and let them fall by the camp, as it were a day's journey on this side, and as it were a day's journey on the other side, round about the camp, and as it were two cubits high upon the face of the earth. And the people stood up all that day, and all that night, and all the next day, and they gathered the quails; he that gathered least gathered ten homers; and they spread them all abroad for themselves round about the camp.'

“The fact of such numbers of quails coming so suddenly, and covering a space of thirty or forty miles, seemed so strange that it was suggested that they must be locusts.



THE AMERICAN QUAIL.

But immense flights of these birds have been seen by travelers in the East. One of them says: ‘Near Constantinople, in the autumn, the sun is often nearly obscured by the prodigious flights of quails

which alight on the coast of the Black Sea near the Bosphorus, and are caught by means of nets spread on high poles planted along the cliff some yards from its edge, against which the birds, exhausted by their passage over the sea, strike themselves and fall.'

"There are also immense flocks of them in Egypt at harvest-time, and on the western coasts of Naples and the shores of Provence 'such prodigious flights have appeared that a hundred thousand have been taken in a day within the space of four or five miles.'

"The quail's nest is generally found among wheat, clover or long grass; it is only a hollow made in the ground and lined with dry grass or clover-stalks. There are from seven to twelve white eggs blotched or speckled with brown. A mower once found in a field of grass a nest with a dozen eggs in it and the mother-bird crouching down upon it, and the leafy branch of a tree was placed over it for shelter and to keep it from harm. The quail, who had at first been frightened

away, returned to her duties and sat on her nest the same as ever, although the owner of the place and his family frequently went to look at her. She would even let visitors come within a foot of her without being alarmed, and finally led forth her brood in safety.

“Quails are great wanderers ; sometimes they emigrate for food, and sometimes for change of climate. One species has for this reason been called ‘the wandering quail.’

“Other members of this gallinaceous order,” added Miss Harson, “such as the ostrich, the cassowary and the emeu, are to be found in Africa and Australia, and these we shall next study, afterward returning to our European birds.”

CHAPTER XVII.

FEATHERED HORSES: THE OSTRICH.

“**I** AM so glad,” said Malcolm, “that we have come to ostriches!”

“Why?” asked his governess. “Because there is so much of them, or because you hope to hear of wonderful exploits?”

“I suppose,” replied the boy, trying to collect his reasons, “that it is because they live in Africa, and—and because the natives hunt them. Anyhow, I’ve always liked ostriches.”

Miss Harson smiled as she said,

“A great many people ‘like ostriches,’ Malcolm. Some like their feathers, some their eggs, some use them as horses; but it is quite probable that, on the whole, the ostrich would prefer not being ‘liked.’ It is an immense bird, as it usually measures seven feet from the ground to the top of its

head, and an outstretched wing is three feet long. Its weight—about eighty pounds—prevents it from flying, but this drawback



THE OSTRICH (*Struthio camelus*).

is almost balanced by its wonderful swiftness in running.

“The plumage of ostriches is generally black and white, though some are gray; the largest feathers are at the ends of the

wings and the tail. The only use which their short wings appear to be to the birds is to balance them in running, as 'by a constant flopping and quivering they preserve that accuracy of equilibrium which is necessary when an animal of such size presses forward with the speed of a railway-engine.' Dr. Livingstone says that the speed of an alarmed ostrich is thirty miles an hour—greater than that of the fleetest horse.

"The feathers of this bird comprise its most valued part, and have long been an article of commerce; for it is quite true that, as has been said, 'our most splendid attire is composed of the shreds we steal from one and another—from sheep and from silkworms. Observe that woman now passing so loftily. She has upon her head a feather plucked from the tail of an ostrich. How proud ought that ostrich to be which has so many more, and all its own!'

"The food of the ostrich is generally supposed to be made up of tenpenny nails and pieces of glass; in fact, one was seen

to take out of a man's hand and swallow a door-key.

“ ‘ Your ostrich, he will swallow brass,
And iron he loves dearly ;
He'll pick up a peck of tenpenny nails
As cocks and hens do barley.’ ”

“ There is scarcely anything an ostrich will not swallow, iron and brass among the rest ; but those metals do not form its nourishment : they only aid in grinding its food. A long time ago an ostrich was taken to England, and people kept it constantly supplied with bags of new nails, which it ate, of course ; but, as nails are not a desirable steady diet even for an ostrich, the bird soon pined away and died. A tame ostrich whose owner was employed in casting bullets picked them up as fast as they were thrown out of the mould on to the floor and deliberately swallowed them. When bullets are shaken out of the mould, they are so hot as to cause cold water to hiss ; so that some idea may be formed of the callousness of the ostrich's throat, neck and mouth, as well as stomach.

“Some things, however, are beyond its powers, as one was actually killed by eating a large quantity of quicklime; another, attempting to manage a parasol, became deformed, and afterward died.

“The usual food of the ostrich is strictly vegetable. It eats stones and such substances, as smaller birds eat gravel or sand—to help grind the tough particles. The contents of an ostrich’s stomach are nearly as varied as are those of a boy’s pocket. Besides pieces of broken glass, a mass of nuts, brass, iron and copper and a collection of stones—some of them weighing over a pound—have been found in that locality.

“This bird is fond of grain of all kinds, and it is a decided nuisance to the grain-growers of Southern Africa. A grain-field on which a flock of ostriches have made a night-raid will be left in a sorry plight, for these birds will eat only the ears, and let the straw go; so that, after one of their visits, a wheat-field is not good for much.

“Poor ostrich! in spite of his size and

his strength, he is constantly hunted to death for the sake of his beautiful plumage. The ostrich-hunters train their best and fleetest horses for this purpose. As soon as the hunter comes within sight of his game he puts his horse into a gentle gallop, so as to keep the ostrich in sight, yet not so as to frighten him from the plain into the mountains. Upon observing himself pursued at a distance, the bird begins to run, at first but gently, being either insensible to his danger or sure of escaping. In this situation he somewhat resembles a man running at full speed. His wings, like two arms, keep working with a motion correspondent to that of his legs, and his speed might very soon snatch him from the grasp of his pursuers, but, unfortunately for the silly creature, instead of going off in a direct line, he takes his course in circles; while the hunters still make a small course within, relieve one another, meet him at unexpected turns, and keep him thus still employed, still followed, for two or three days together. At last, spent with fatigue and hunger, and finding all avenues of escape

closed to him, he endeavors to hide himself from those enemies whom he cannot avoid, and buries his head in the sand or plunges it into the first thicket he meets. Sometimes, however, he attempts to face his pursuers; and, though in general the most gentle animal in nature, when driven to desperation he defends himself with his beak, his wings and his feet. Such is the force of his movements that a man would be utterly unable to withstand the shock."

"I thought that the ostrich could go faster than a horse?" said Malcolm.

"That is very true," was the reply. "The Bible tells us that 'what time she lifteth herself up on high, she scorneth the horse and his rider,' and for a short time an ostrich can outrun a race-horse, but it cannot hold out so long; and, as we have just seen, the bird can finally be hunted down.

"Here is another way of catching ostriches. Speaking of purchasing feathers from the native tribes of South Africa, the writer says: 'Of all the tribes that are successful in the feather-hunt, the little

insignificant Bosjesman is perhaps the most successful. The mode which he employs is so singular and so clever that it is worthy of explanation. He first takes a dead ostrich and skins it, cutting off the legs, but leaving the remainder of the skin entire. The neck is so fitted up with a stick running through it that it can be moved about easily by a person holding an end of the stick in his hand. The skin of the back is then strained over a kind of saddle and left to dry. When thoroughly hard and stiff, and there are ostriches near, the tiny hunter fits the feathered saddle on his back in such a way that when he stoops the neck of the stuffed bird is erect and he can hold the end of the guiding-stick in his hand. He takes with him his bow and a supply of poisoned arrows, and after rubbing his black legs with some white substance goes off toward the unsuspecting ostriches. By means of the stick he manœuvres the neck of the ostrich-skin as if it were animated by the bird itself, sometimes stooping it toward the ground

as if pecking at something, sometimes turning the head from side to side as if the bird were looking out for foes. And so well does he imitate the action of an ostrich that those who have seen the performance declare that it is almost impossible to distinguish between the false bird and the true. On he goes, now and then stopping, but always drawing nearer and nearer, until he gets among the birds. Down goes the neck, out comes an arrow, and in a moment one or more of the ostriches have poisoned darts in their bodies. The wounded birds start, give the alarm, and away they run, the Bosjesman after them just as if he were one of themselves and quite as frightened as they. About the birds that have been struck he does not trouble himself, for he knows well enough that even if the wound were no more than the scratch of a pin it would be as surely the deathblow as if the arrow had gone through the heart; it is simply a question of time. So, by industriously keeping up the deception, the cunning little fellow lays low many a swift and

wary bird which would laugh at the speed of a race-horse and could annihilate with a single kick its small yet formidable foe."

"Do ostriches *kick*?" asked the children in surprise, after listening with great interest to this curious account of an ostrich-hunt.

"They do indeed," replied Miss Harson. "The writer whose description I have just read speaks of the wonderful size and strength of the ostrich's legs, and says that they can be used not only for flight, but for defence. When closely attacked, the ostrich has a way of kicking at its adversary with these formidable legs, and often inflicts severe injury by the claw of its foot, which is sharp and angular. A man has been killed by a single blow from one of these weapons. Curiously enough, it delivers the stroke forward, so as to attack an advancing foe, and does not kick backward, as a horse does. And when running it can throw up the pebbles with its feet at every stride and discharge a constant series of volleys against its

pursuer, about whose ears they rattle like so many shot."

It was generally admitted that a kicking ostrich must be a funny sight; but presently Malcolm asked, with a great deal of interest,

"Miss Harson, are there any more ostrich-hunts?"

"I believe not, Malcolm," was the reply; "I do not wish to hear of your going to Africa to hunt ostriches. The Bosjesman sometimes takes them in an easier way. When he discovers an ostrich-nest and does not care about the eggs, he waits until both birds have left it; and then, creeping up to the sand-heaped nest, he scoops out a hollow in the sand, covers himself up neatly, and lies there patiently until the parent-birds return to their home. In about three seconds each of the birds has received a poisoned arrow, and they soon give up."

"I think that seems wickedest of all," said Clara, full of pity for the poor awkward birds that were always getting killed.

"It does seem like taking a very mean advantage of the unsuspecting ostriches," said his governess, "and it is much fairer to hunt them openly; but when wounded they are dangerous birds to approach. An ostrich that has been brought to the ground plunges itself about, spins round as it lies, and lashes out in every direction with its powerful legs. No one dares then approach within its reach; for even a simple blow from its foot would break a limb or fracture a skull.

"As soon as it can be done without danger the feathers are stripped from the wings and the tail of the ostrich, and the best are laid aside for sale, while the others are stuck round the hat as trophies; so that the odd sight of a wide-awake hat profusely decorated with ostrich-plumes is common enough in that half-civilized part of Africa which is near the Cape of Good Hope and Natal.

"The nest—if nest it can be called—of this strange bird is a shallow pit scraped out of the sand and about four or five feet around. The sand taken from the middle is placed about the edge to make a sort

of bank. Ten or twelve eggs are often found on this margin, besides the twenty or forty inside. The outside eggs are supposed to be put there to feed the young birds with soft food before they are able to swallow the hard, dry substances on which their parents have to live in their desert home. The eggs are of course very large, and the natives of the dry, sandy regions where they are found are very glad to use them for food. They are said to taste very much like a duck's egg, and are cooked by being placed upright, with a hole broken in the upper end, in a pile of hot ashes. A stick is placed in this hole and constantly turned around; so that every part of the yolk and white is cooked into a kind of omelet. The shell is very thick and nearly as strong as bone; so that it is very useful for holding liquids, and the African women use the empty eggs for water-vessels. The shells are also sometimes made into ornamental drinking-cups.

“The ostrich has been called a careless mother, but it is known that both the parent-birds take excellent care of their young

brood and defend them even with their lives. A traveler came suddenly upon a pair of grown ostriches surrounded by their young, when they all scampered off; but suddenly the male bird acted as if he had broken a leg, fell down in the sand and struggled violently. While he was thus distracting the attention of the intruder, his mate was leading off the young brood in another direction. Sometimes the mother-bird pretends to be lame, while her partner carries off the young. When the spectator thinks that he will find the maimed bird an easy prey, it coolly picks itself up and vanishes."

The children were delighted to find that the ostrich itself could play tricks, although it suffered so much from the tricks of men; and Miss Harson found that their interest in the subject was apparently inexhaustible.

"The ostrich, of course," continued the governess, "is not a singing-bird, and its voice is described as depending very much on its temper or upon the hour of day. Its night-cry is said to be deep and powerful—almost like the distant roaring of a lion;

but when it is angry and fights, it hisses quite in the goose-fashion. If it gains the victory, it utters a self-satisfied kind of cackle.

“This bird is easily tamed, and will allow itself to be used as a horse. A large one has been known to carry two men on its back, and then to run so fast that its feet scarcely seemed to touch the ground. Two tame ones on the banks of the Niger ‘seemed to be very proud of themselves and quite conscious of their own beauty. They were accustomed to strut in the sun along the side of the house for the purpose of admiring their own shadows. As they went along, turning round every moment for another peep at their beautiful forms as reflected on the wall of the house, they used to keep their wings constantly quivering—probably for the purpose of fanning themselves by their vibration.’

“Tame ostriches are wonderful eaters, and do not hesitate to appropriate anything that comes handy. Somebody says : ‘I was one day walking by the side of the ostrich-department in the Zoological Gardens, having in

my hand part of a bun, the remainder of which had been given to sundry animals. Suddenly a dark shadow came over my head, a smart blow was given to my right hand, and on looking round I saw an ostrich swallowing the bun with a sedate aspect. It was but a little piece, and was almost entirely hidden in the closed hand; but the bird's beak acted like a wedge, drove the hand open, and with the same movement extracted the contents.'

"An ostrich at large cannot be a very welcome sight in the poultry-yard. A story is told of a duck that had successfully hatched a large brood of ducklings and was leading them about in all the pride and pomp of maternity. Unfortunately, she happened to pass by a spot where a tame ostrich was kept, and then occurred a terrible catastrophe, for, with the mildest and most gentle expression imaginable, the ostrich stretched out its neck, picked up one duckling after another, and swallowed in rapid succession the whole brood, heedless of the remonstrances and the attacks of their afflicted mother."

“Wasn’t that dreadful?” said Edith ; and the tide of sympathy seemed to have turned quite against the ostrich.

“We must leave the cousins of the ostrich until another evening,” said the governess ; “for his ways and doings have taken up so much time that our talk must now come to an end.”

Malcolm pronounced it an uncommonly nice talk—“almost better than parrots ;” and his sleep that night was somewhat disturbed by dreaming that, mounted on an ostrich, he was flying wildly through the desert.

CHAPTER XVIII.

NEAR RELATIONS: THE CASSOWARY AND THE EMEU.

“THE cassowary, the rhea and the emeu,” said Miss Harson, “are all cousins of the ostrich, and are very curious-looking creatures. They all belong to the family of the Brevipennes, or short-winged birds.”

The children laughed outright at the funny pictures, and thought the cassowary, with its broad back and helmeted head, a particularly ridiculous-looking bird.

“It doesn’t seem to have any feathers,” said Malcolm ; “it looks as if it was fringed all around.”

“The material of these strange-looking plumes,” replied Miss Harson, “resembles the hair of a horse’s tail. Their color is black with a slight shade of red in it, and

each plume is double—that is, two spring from one shaft, or quill—and body, tail and wings are all covered alike. The head of the cassowary is exceedingly curious, having on it a bony structure something like a helmet. It is black before and yellow behind, and gives the bird quite a fierce look.

“The cassowary is about five feet high, and resembles the ostrich in many of its ways. It, too, with impunity swallows all kinds of indigestible things. Food passes so quickly down its throat that eggs reach its stomach unbroken. It is especially comical when in motion. ‘Instead of going directly forward, it seems to kick up behind with one leg; and then, making a bound onward with the other, it goes with such prodigious velocity that the swiftest racer would be left far behind.’

“Although so formidable in appearance that it might be expected to be one of the most fierce of animals, the cassowary is by nature gentle and inoffensive. ‘It never attacks others; and, instead of the bill, when attacked it rather makes use of its legs and kicks like a horse, or runs against



THE CASSOWARY (*Casuarus galeatus*).

its pursuer, beats him down and treads him to the ground.'

"The cassowary, though gentle, is said to be as much irritated by the sight of red as is a bull, and to dislike ragged people as strongly as does a house-dog. A tame cassowary has been known repeatedly to dash at people, and to use its best endeavors to kick them, simply because they wore red garments or were not respectably dressed."

The children were very much amused with Miss Harson's account of this fastidious bird, particularly as its dress consisted only of horse-hair, and they immediately inquired if there were not some stories about it.

"I think we can find some," was the reply, "about another species of cassowary. The one we have been considering inhabits Molucca and the neighboring islands, and its voice is said to resemble the grunting of a hog. Altogether, it can scarcely be called an attractive animal. In Australia there is a kind of cassowary, or *mooruk*, which, although similar, is a



THE AUSTRALIAN CASSOWARY OR EMEU (*Dromaius Novae Hollandiae*).

finer-looking bird, and this species is remarkably interesting. A person living in Sidney had two of these mooruks, male and female, and the account given of their doings is very funny.

“When placed in the yard, he says, they walked about as tame as turkeys. They approached any one who came in, as if desirous of being fed, and were very docile. They began pecking at a bone which they had found (probably not having tasted any meat for some time), and would not, while engaged upon it, touch some boiled potatoes which were thrown to them. Indeed, it was afterward found that they ate better out of a dish than from the ground, having no doubt been early accustomed to be fed in that manner. They also seemed fond of scraping about the dunghill, and appeared to pick up food from it—probably insects or grubs. ‘They were as familiar as if born and bred among us for years, and did not require time to reconcile them to their new situation, but were sociable and quite at home at once. We found them on the following day rather too

tame, or, like spoilt pets, too often in the way. One or both of them would walk into the kitchen, and while one was dodging under the table and chairs the other would leap upon the table, keeping the cook in a state of excitement; or they would be heard in the hall or in the library in search of food or information; or they would walk up stairs and then quickly descend again, making their peculiar chirping, whistling noise. Not a door could be left open but in they walked.

“They kept the servants constantly on the alert. If one went to open the door, on turning round she found a mooruk behind her; for they seldom went together, generally wandering apart from each other. If any attempt was made to turn them out by force, they would dart rapidly round the room, dodging about under the tables, chairs and sofas, and then end by squatting down under a sofa or in a corner. Indeed, it was impossible to remove the bird except by carrying it away. On attempting this, the long muscular legs would begin kicking and struggling, when it would soon get released and

politely walk out of its own accord. The best method was to entice them out as if you had something eatable in your hand, when they would follow the direction in which you wished to lead them. On the housemaid once attempting to turn the bird out of one of the rooms, it kicked her and tore her dress.' ”

The children were very merry over the mooruk's antics: it was even better than ostriches; and Miss Harson laughed, too, as she continued:

“There is so much to read about this queer bird that one scarcely knows where to stop. But I shall have to tell you of the funny actions of these same two mooruks with the carpenter.

“When he was in the yard, making some alterations in their cage previous to their voyage to England, it was very amusing to see them squat down like dogs, watching the man with the greatest apparent interest in all his actions, enjoying the hammering noise and occasionally picking up a nail, which was not, in this instance, swallowed, but again dropped. One of them, however,

swallowed the carpenter's oil-stone, which so alarmed the man that he thought the bird had committed suicide, and hurried to inform its master of the catastrophe; but, to his surprise, he was told that if he did not take care the mooruks would swallow his hammer, nails and chisel. The birds kept close to the man until he went to his dinner, when they went about the yard as usual, resuming their position near him as soon as he returned to work, and not leaving it until he had finished.

"They never appeared to take any notice of or be frightened at the jabiru, or gigantic crane, which was in the same yard, although that sedate, stately bird was not pleased at their intrusion. One day the jabiru was observed spreading his long wings and clattering his beak opposite one of the mooruks, as if in ridicule at its wingless condition; the mooruk, on the other hand, was preening its feathers and spreading out its funny little apology for wings, as if proud of displaying the stiff, horny shafts with which they were adorned.

"As to swallowing things, the narrator

says that the instant the mooruk saw an egg laid by a hen he darted upon it, and, breaking the shell, devoured it immediately, as if he had been accustomed to eggs all his life. One morning the male mooruk was missing and was found in the bedroom up stairs drinking water out of the water-jug. There were some silkworms in the room at the time, but fortunately they were covered; otherwise, their owner thought, Mr. Mooruk would have made a meal of them.

“When about the house, these birds displayed extraordinary delight in a variety of diet. In a single day they satisfied their appetites with bones, whetstones, corks, nails and raw potatoes. One dived into thick starch and devoured a muslin cuff, while the other evinced a great partiality for nails and pebbles; then they stole the jabiru’s meat. If eggs and butter were left upon the kitchen-table, they were soon devoured by these marauders; and when the servants were at their dinner in the kitchen, they had to be very watchful, for the long necks of the birds appeared between their arms, de-

vouring everything off the plates ; or if the dinner-table was left for a moment, they would mount upon it and clear all before them. At other times they stood at the table waiting for food to be given to them, although they did not hesitate to remove anything that was within their reach.

"The mooruks, it seems, delighted in being washed by having buckets of water dashed over them, and would lie at full length upon the stones in the yard to enjoy this pleasure. On rising from their bath they began shaking themselves, and then dashed off, careering madly round the yard, apparently in great delight, and sending the other animals flying in all directions. Even the sedate jabiru seemed astonished at their wonderful capers and antics, and found it necessary to flap his huge wings and clatter his beak louder than ever, as in the course of their gambols they nearly upset him.

"But we really must leave the mooruks," added the governess, "and attend to some other cousins of the ostrich. The rhea is also called 'the American ostrich,' as it is found in South America. It is very much

like the African ostrich in its speed, its mode of nest-making, and its propensity for eating all kinds of strange substances. It is also said to eat little fishes when they are washed on shore, and amber when it can get it.

“This bird is about the size of an ordinary ostrich, and is covered with long gray feathers on the back and the tail. Indeed, it has no tail but feathers. The breast and other lower parts are white. Like the cassowary, it has a very funny way of getting itself along. It goes very swiftly, and seems assisted in its motion by a kind of tubercle behind, like a heel, upon which, on plain ground, it treads very securely. In its course it uses a very odd kind of action, lifting up one wing, which it keeps elevated for a time, till, letting it drop, it lifts up the other. It runs with such swiftness that the fleetest dogs are thrown out in the pursuit.

“The rhea readily takes to the water, and will swim from island to island. When swimming very little of its body appears above water, and its neck is extended forward. Its progress is slow.

“Like all the rest of the species, these birds lay immense quantities of eggs, and when setting are quite fierce, attacking even a man on horseback should he pass too near them. The male bird is said to hatch the eggs, and afterward to take care of the young.

“The Australian cassowary, or emeu, is noticeable for the regularity with which its hairy plumes are parted down the back; the part looks as if made with a comb. The young emeus are very pretty. Their plumage, instead of the sober brown mixed with gray that forms the only tinting of the full-grown bird, is adorned with four black bands over the back and sides, divided from one another by a narrow line of white. These black stripes also pass up the neck, but not quite to the head, which is decorated with scattered black spots. The breast has two of these stripes.

“Emeus, whether tame or wild, are said to show great curiosity at the approach of any object with which they are not acquainted. It was so with those of which I told you. A gentleman describes the

amusing conduct of some of them which he saw in a field near Sydney. 'Stopping,' he says, 'to observe one which was at a short distance from the fence, he immediately came down to have a look at me. The second bird was some distance off. But, with their usual keenness of vision, on perceiving me viewing his companion, he came stalking down rapidly, and they both stared at me most attentively, stretching out their necks for the sake of making a nearer acquaintance, when, finding no result from our interview, and their curiosity being satisfied, they quietly stalked away.' "

Judging from the delight of Miss Harson's little audience with her accounts of these overgrown members of the scraper family, it seemed probable that, if their desires had been satisfied, an ostrich, a cassowary and an emeu would soon have been stalking through the carefully-kept grounds of Elmridge, much, no doubt, to Patrick's disgust and to the children's gratification. Papa was getting quite accustomed to being asked if various strange birds could not be

introduced on the premises, and he was very much pleased to find that his little son and daughters were so deeply interested in natural history.



CHAPTER XIX.

LONG-LEGGED GENTRY: THE HERON.

“**W**HAT do you think,” said Miss Harson to her little pupils, “of calling a family of birds by such a strange name as ‘stalkers’? When you look, though, at their legs and their general appearance, you will not be surprised at this. They seem as though they were walking on stilts, as they all have very long legs, with which they wade far into the water, where they will stand for hours on the watch for prey. Here is a picture of two herons; they are classed as the head of this tribe. The one in the water is a white heron, or egret; the other is the common heron.

“The common heron is an awkward-looking bird with a large head and bill set upon a snaky neck, that, with the high-

humped back, forms a curve like the figure 8. The long legs are set far back in the



COMMON HERON AND EGRET, OR WHITE HERON.

body, the feet and claws are large, and the tail is very short. The prevailing color of the plumage is gray, at parts deepening into dark slate-color and bluish-black or fading off into white.'

“Hérons, although great eaters, are always thin. They live chiefly upon fish and other dwellers in the water, like all wading birds, but it is only in fine weather that they can get a plentiful supply. In cold or stormy weather the fish that before came into shallow water keep in the deep, as they find it to be the warmest. Frogs and lizards also seldom venture from their lurking-places, and the heron is obliged to support himself upon patience, and even to take up the weeds that grow in the water. At those times he contracts a consumptive disposition, which succeeding plenty is not able to remove ; so that the meagre glutton spends his time between want and riot. Hence, notwithstanding the care with which he takes his prey and the amazing quantity he devours, the heron is generally lean ; and, though his crop is usually found full, yet his flesh poorly covers his bones.

“The heron is a shy bird, ungraceful in its movements, with a harsh voice and unsocial habits. It will stand for hours in the water with its head drawn close in, ready to

dart upon its finny prey and transfix it with its sharp beak. 'A real hermit of the woods and streams, consorting not even with its own kith and kin except during the breeding season, when it becomes lively, noisy and gregarious, forming those communities of birds, called 'heronries,' which were once guarded and preserved with jealous care for the sake of the sport which they afforded in hawking, and which still exist, although the royal game of hunting herons to death with trained hawks and falcons has happily fallen into disuse.'"

"Weren't they cruel people who did that, Miss Harson?" asked Clara.

"It was certainly a cruel sport," was the reply, "but it was often practiced in old times by people who were not cruel in other respects. They had not learned to look upon the inferior animals as God's creatures and objects of his care.

"The heron in this picture," continued the governess, "is evidently watching for fish. It used to be thought among fishermen that there was something in the feet and the legs of this bird which attracted

fish, and particularly eels. They were supposed to contain an oil which, if rubbed over a worm, would render it a sure bait. Ignorant people had such respect for the heron's fishing-powers that they believed



THE FALCON (*Falco*).

one of its feet, carried in the pocket, would bring success.

“ Sometimes, however, the winged fisher himself gets caught. A story is told by an old fisherman who went down the lake one morning in a boat with his son to look

at the lines they had set over-night, when he was struck by the unusual circumstance of seeing a heron rise from the water, reach a certain height, and then suddenly fall to the water again. This was repeated two or three times before they reached the spot, and was accompanied by much struggling and by the cries peculiar to the bird. When they came to the place, they found that the heron was hooked, and that a fine pike of about five or six pounds' weight lay on the surface of the water at the head of the line. Taking hold of the line, they began to haul the bird in; but the nearer it came, the greater its struggles and cries, and at last it attacked the son, striking him on the side of the head with its long beak, drawing blood. However, it was secured and brought away alive. It appears that the heron had struck the fish after it had taken the bait, and in eating it had extricated the bait to which the hook was fixed and swallowed both together. Rising on the wing to escape, it could reach no farther than the end of the line, and was consequently forced back

again. So that, you see," added Miss Har-son, "was heron-fishing, instead of pike-fishing. The bird must have been astonished enough to find himself in such a scrape.

"The heron appears to be a bird of remarkably strange habits, and is said to prefer to perish with cold rather than seek a milder climate. 'In the different seasons of the year it constantly appears so melancholy and insensible that it will remain alone and exposed in the worst weather on some stump in the midst of an inundated meadow, while the blongius (a smaller kind of heron) takes shelter in the thick herbage, and the bittern in the midst of the reeds.'

"It is said to be a very timid bird, fleeing on the slightest approach of danger, and often imagining it where none exists, although its heavy wings and great length of neck and bill would certainly make it a formidable foe to any feathered enemy. The rook has an especial spite against this long-legged coward, and always gets the better of him. Some one watched a large heron sailing heavily through the air 'with its long legs trailing

behind like the ropes from a ship's stern,' trying to escape from an angry rook that persistently followed it. As it could not hope, however, to beat the rook at flying, it finally took refuge in a ditch. As soon as the rook saw this he perched himself on the branch of a tree that overhung its retreat, and began cawing. This reached the ear of two dusky friends who were far on their way to a neighboring feeding-field, and caused them to turn around and fly back to their crony in the tree. The three together then began to abuse the heron with all the power of their harsh voices; and, apparently unable to stand it, the object of their persecution started up and again rose into the air. No sooner was it fairly under way than the rooks followed in close pursuit; and, although the heron turned and doubled and lifted up its unearthly voice and shrieked, as far as the eye could see the chase went on."

"Did they catch him?" asked Malcolm, eagerly.

"That is just where the story breaks off," replied Miss Harson, smiling—"as the

birds pass out of sight; but it is related to show how little terror the heron's strength inspires. Courage avails more than strength with birds as well as with men. But, after all, the heron was not intended to fight. He has other work to do.

"The heron makes its nest among the reeds and rushes, or on rocks near the coasts, or in tall trees. The nest is a large, loose affair like that of the rook, made of sticks and lined with wool. Like the rooks, herons build together in great numbers and occupy the same trees year after year. More than eighty nests were counted in one oak tree. It is said however, that the indolence of the birds prevents them from building a nest when they can get one that has been deserted by the rook or the owl. They usually enlarge and reline this second-hand house, and drive off the former owners should they attempt to return to their quarters.

"From the solitary habits of the heron, it is quite probable that the great American poet's 'Stanzas to a Waterfowl' were addressed to this bird:

“ ‘ Whither, midst falling dew,
While glow the heavens with the last steps of day,
Far through their rosy depths dost thou pursue
Thy solitary way ?

“ ‘ Vainly the fowler’s eye
Might mark thy distant flight to do thee wrong,
As, darkly painted on the crimson sky,
Thy figure floats along.

“ ‘ Seek’st thou the plashy brink
Of weedy lake or marge of river wide,
Or where the rocking billows rise and sink
On the chafed ocean-side ?

“ ‘ There is a Power whose care
Teaches thy way along that pathless coast—
The desert and illimitable air,
Lone wandering, but not lost.

“ ‘ All day thy wings have fanned,
At that far height, the cold, thin atmosphere,
Yet stoop not, weary, to the welcome land,
Though the dark night is near.

“ ‘ And soon that toil shall end ;
Soon shalt thou find a summer home and rest,
And scream among thy fellows ; reeds shall bend
Soon o’er thy sheltered nest.

“ ‘ Thou’rt gone—the abyss of heaven
Hath swallowed up thy form ; yet on my heart
Deeply hath sunk the lesson thou hast given,
And shall not soon depart.

“ ‘ He who from zone to zone
Guides through the boundless sky thy certain flight
In the long way that I must tread alone
Will lead my steps aright.’ ”

CHAPTER XX.

BROTHERS AND SISTERS: THE CRANE.

„**A**FTER the herons,” said Miss Harson, “come the cranes ; and of this family there are said to be about one hundred varieties, most of which are found in temperate climates.”

“This is a nicer-looking bird than the heron,” said Malcolm as Miss Harson turned to a picture of the crane, “but it is standing in the same way, as if it was watching for a fish for its breakfast.”

“No doubt he is,” replied his governess. “And you will see that the crane is better shaped than the heron, and the lower part of its plumage is not unlike that of the ostrich. It is the finest-looking member of its family, and, like all its relatives, it is a great fisher and a great eater. Providence has furnished the bills of birds of this kind with peculiar nerves by which they

are enabled to feel the food they seek at the bottom of marshes and shallows. As the length of the crane's neck, including the bill, is proportioned to that of its legs,



THE CRANE (*Grus cinerea*).

it can seize its prey when at a considerable depth below the surface of the water.

“These birds are migratory; and they fly in large companies with a great deal of noise:

“ ‘Vast clang is heard
Along the skies when, from incessant showers
Escaping, and from winter’s cold, the cranes
Take wing and over ocean speed away.’

“In flying they form themselves into a figure like a $\succ$, and in olden times many strange stories were told of them. They were said to fly aloft because they could have a better prospect before them, and for this purpose they chose a captain, whom the others followed. Certain birds were supposed to be placed behind ‘to give signals by their manner of cry to range orderly in ranks and keep close together in array; and this they do by turns, each one in his course.’ It was declared that they had sentinels to keep a strict watch all night, and that these stood on one foot and held a little stone within the other, which, by falling from it if they should chance to sleep, might awaken them. While these watched, all the rest were supposed to sleep with their heads tucked under their wings, resting sometimes on one foot and sometimes on the other. The captain was said to bear his head up aloft into the air

and give signal to the flock of what was to be done.

“Cranes are often seen in large flocks in the marshes about the Cape of Good Hope, and some one who has observed them there says that ‘he never saw a flock of them on the ground that had not some birds placed, apparently as sentinels, to keep a lookout while the others are feeding. These sentinels stand on one leg, and at intervals stretch out their necks as if to observe that all is safe. On any notice of danger the whole flock are instantly on the wing.’

“The crane differs from the heron in being courageous. A story is told of some cranes in Algiers who alighted near a spot where some soldiers were at work. Presently a large eagle, swooping down on them, attempted to seize one, but the cranes defended and rescued their unfortunate companion. The eagle then tried to seize another, but the cranes defended themselves vigorously, and a regular battle ensued. After it had raged for some time the ravens arrived and took the part of the cranes. The combat then went on with

renewed fury, and there is no knowing what would have been the result if a soldier had not scattered the combatants by killing one of the cranes with his sword. They were so busy fighting that he got close to them without being noticed. But, after all, when the battle ended, the eagle succeeded in carrying off one of the cranes in triumph."

"Couldn't ever so many cranes beat one eagle?" asked Malcolm. "Such great birds as they are, too!"

"It seems not," replied Miss Harson, "though I agree with you, Malcolm, in thinking it rather strange. But we must remember the great power of the eagle and the terror that all other feathered creatures have of his ferocity. Cranes, too, do not fly rapidly. Flying seems to be hard work for them, and they are described as frequently alighting, in their flight, on the top of some tree, where they will stand for hours as if to rest. When their flight is high and silent, it is supposed by some people to be a sign of continued fine weather, as in cloudy, wet and stormy weather these birds fly low and are very noisy.

“The crane is said to be devoid of fear or unconscious of danger, and equally at ease while wading in sight in the shallows of a navigable river as in a far-off and inaccessible island pool; equally fearless amid the branches of a home-skirting oak or elm as in the depths of the unfrequented or pathless forest.

“The nests of these birds are generally found in solitary, waste and marshy places, though in Eastern countries they are said to prefer inhabited regions, and even to build on the tops of houses. They lay from three to five eggs, and in times of danger will carry them in their claws.

“Cranes, like most birds of this family, have very comical ways, and those who watch them closely are well repaid for the trouble. The dance of the cranes is not a mere fable, and the Greeks are said to have taken one of their most popular dances from the movements of these birds. A naturalist says: ‘The games and dances which the cranes indulge in among themselves are not mere idle stories. They have been seen to form groups in various

fashions, advance one toward another, make a kind of salutation, adopt the strangest postures—in a word, indulge in pantomimes both burlesque and amusing.'

"They seem to be very affectionate birds. A story is told of two brown cranes belonging to a gentleman; one of them died, and the remaining one refused to be comforted. He so pined for his companion that he seemed likely to follow her in a short time, when his master fortunately thought of putting a large looking-glass into the aviary. As soon as the crane saw his own reflection in the glass he took it for granted that his beloved mate had returned to him; he stood close to the mirror, plumed his feathers and showed every sign of happiness. The mourner recovered his health and spirits, and spent nearly all his time before the looking-glass; he lived for many years, and finally died from an accident.

"I must tell you," continued Miss Harson, "the story of 'The Cranes of Ibycus' before we leave the subject. Ibycus was a Grecian poet quite famous in his day, and he was going to the Olympic games to con-

tend for the poet's prize, when he lost his way in a forest and fell into the hands of two robbers, who cruelly murdered him. As he was dying he turned his eyes toward heaven, and, seeing a flock of cranes passing over the spot, he cried out, 'O ye bird-travelers, become the avengers of Ibycus!' The next day the robbers were quietly taking part in the Olympic contest, when the news of the murder, which arrived during the day, excited a feeling of sorrow among the assembly. No one suspected the murderers, though, until suddenly a flight of cranes passed over the place uttering loud cries. 'Do you see the cranes of Ibycus?' said one of the villains to his companion, with a laugh. Some persons standing near them heard this remark, and it passed quickly from one to another, until a general suspicion was roused. The murderers were arrested and put to the torture until they confessed their guilt, when they were immediately put to death; so that it seemed as if the cranes had really obeyed the dying command of Ibycus."

CHAPTER XXI.

A QUEER COUPLE: THE JABIRU AND THE ADJUTANT.

“**J**ABIRU, or gigantic crane,” read Malcolm at the bottom of a colored plate. “What a beautiful bird, if he *has* such a long, funny bill!”

“And see the pretty pink lilies with flat leaves like dishes near where he is standing in the water,” added Clara; while little Edith stretched up on tiptoe “to look too.”

“This is the Australian crane,” said Miss Harson—“the dignified bird, you remember, who did not approve of the mooruks. The jabiru has a beautiful metallic brilliancy of plumage, which is equal to that of the humming-birds, particularly in the blue-green feathers of the head and the neck, and it is also very graceful, though a little odd-looking at first sight. Its attitudes and bear-

ing, whether in a state of repose, walking rapidly or stalking gently over a lawn or



THE JABIRU, AN AUSTRALIAN CRANE.

yard with its measured, noiseless step, have a combination of grace and elegance, and it

displays an independence of manner well suited to a bird so wild and roaming in its habits. It is gentle and good-tempered, soon gets reconciled to captivity and seems to take pleasure in being noticed and admired, remaining very quiet to be looked at, keeping its bright eyes upon the spectator, however, during the time.

“The bill of the jabiru is of an immense size; and, although the mandibles look so unwieldy, it picks up the smallest object with ease and clatters them together with a loud noise when catching flies. In doing this it remains very quiet, as if asleep; and if a fly passes, it is snapped up in an instant. In a wild state these birds are to be found by salt-water creeks and lagoons busily engaged in fishing; they are very voracious, and must devour an immense number of fishes and reptiles.

“The jabiru is said to be an expensive pet, as it requires a pound and a half of meat every day, and this must always be fresh and good. When hungry, it looks for the cook, and if she has neglected its food looks into the kitchen, as if to remind

her of the neglect, and waits quietly, but with a searching eye, during the time the meat is cut up, until it is fed.

“The bird that lived where the mooruks were kept became quite as tame as they were. On the evening of its arrival it walked into the hall, gazed at the gas, which had just been lighted, and then walked up stairs, looking for a roosting-place, but, not liking that locality, came quietly down again and returned to the yard. It finally went to roost in the coach-house between the carriages, and afterward retired there regularly soon after dark every evening. In the daytime it preferred that part of the yard where the sun was shining; and whenever one of the mooruks came between it and the sun, it was very indignant, clattering its beak, ruffling its feathers and flapping its wings at them. If these hints were of no avail, with its beak it gave them a blow which soon made them walk away.

“‘When the jabiru was first placed in the yard, where some poultry were kept, it

stared at the fowls, and they ran away on his approach, although he did not make the least attempt to molest them; and when striding round the yard, all the poultry fled before him, although it did not appear to be an intentional chase on his part. There happened to be in the yard a pugnacious, fussy little bantam-cock who would not permit the intrusion of any stranger, and on seeing the jabiru he started up, with expanded and fluttering wings and ruffled feathers, in a violent state of excitement, cackling and screaming most vehemently and making efforts as energetic as so diminutive a bird was capable of to frighten and drive him out of the yard.

“The jabiru, with his keen, bright eyes, regarded the little fluttering object with cool contempt and walked about as before; the bantam followed. At last the jabiru turned and strode after the consequential little creature, as if to crush it under his feet, when the bantam, seeing matters taking this serious turn, made off as fast as possible—like all little bullies—and did not again venture to defy so for-

midable an opponent. In a few days the jabiru became quite domesticated among the poultry, and they had got over their fear of him.' ”

“What a nice little bird!” said Edith, who had listened with great interest to the account of the jabiru, and who appeared to feel quite an affection for it.

The other children laughed; and Miss Harson said kindly,

“Your ‘little bird,’ dear, is quite as tall as Malcolm, and I am afraid that you would run away if you saw it, which you are not likely to do.”

“Oh,” exclaimed Clara, “do look at this funny creature with a great heavy bill and a pouch under his neck!”

“That,” said the governess, “is another ‘stalker’—the adjutant, which at a distance bears some resemblance to a man in a white waistcoat and dark trousers. It has an absurd-looking head, which seems as if it was made of wood, and the bill looks like two long sticks, with which the bird makes a loud clattering noise in order to clean them. A pouch or bag hangs down under

the chin; which circumstance seems to connect it with the pelican family.

“These birds are found in great numbers on the banks of some of the rivers of Bengal and in Africa. The natives of India believe them to be inhabited by the souls of departed Brahmins, and for this reason they never molest them. When Bishop Heber—who has written a very interesting account of his travels in that country—landed in Calcutta, the adjutant was the first bird he saw there; and he says of it: ‘In the morning, as the day broke, we were much struck with the singular spectacle before us. Besides the usual apparatus of a place of arms, the walks, roofs and ramparts of the fort swarmed with gigantic birds—the hurgila (their Indian name), larger than the largest turkey and twice as tall as the heron, which in some respects they much resemble, except that they have a large blue-and-red pouch under the lower bill, in which, we are told, they keep such food as they cannot eat at the moment. These birds share with the jackals, who enter the fort through the drains, the post of scavenger; but, unlike

them, instead of shunning mankind day and night, they lounge about with perfect fear-



THE ADJUTANT (*Ciconia argala*).

lessness all day long, and almost jostled us from our paths.'

"The adjutant is as great a glutton as the

heron, and nothing comes amiss to its all-accommodating stomach. A leg of mutton and a litter of five kittens, swallowed whole, proved equally acceptable, with the additional sauce of earth, bones and hair picked up between-times. Thus the adjutant is most useful as a scavenger in the neglected streets of Oriental cities.

"Here is a little story about this bird," continued Miss Harson, smiling in answer to the three pairs of inquiring eyes: "A young adjutant about five feet high was brought up in the family of an English resident at Sierra Leone, and walked about the house very much at his ease. He was usually fed in the great hall where the family meals were taken, and he got into the habit of presenting himself daily in that apartment at dinner-time. He would often arrive before any of the guests or the family appeared, and would place himself behind his master's chair. The servants had to watch him narrowly, but, in spite of their care, he would sometimes help himself without leave. One day the adjutant seized a whole boiled chicken and swallowed

it in an instant, having so elastic a throat that a hare or a small fox will go down without difficulty."

The adjutant was pronounced "very funny," but no one seemed to want him for a pet, thinking him more useful in his own home.

CHAPTER XXII.

STORKS AND THEIR WAYS.

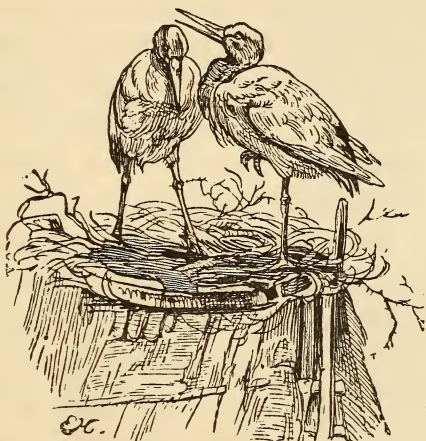
“**H**ERE is quite a different picture from those we usually have for our birds,” said Miss Harson.—“Let me see if you can explain it, Malcolm.”

“Why, it’s the top of a rough-looking tower or chimney with two birds that look like the jabiru on top of it, one of them standing on one leg and one on two legs.”

“The birds are storks,” was the reply, “and they do look like the jabiru, for they belong to the same family. The stork, however, is white, with black quill-feathers in the wings. That is the nest on top of the chimney.

“This bird is the most domestic and agreeable of the whole heron family, and is beloved and cared for wherever it makes its appearance. It has immense wings,

measuring seven feet across when they are fully spread, and with these great wings it seems to fly all over the world. It always leaves Europe in the autumn for



STORKS ON NEST.

a warmer climate, and is so very regular in its flittings that the prophet Jeremiah says, ‘The stork knoweth her appointed time,’ and the poet asks:

“ ‘Who bids the stork, Columbus-like, explore
Heavens not his own, and worlds unknown before?
Who calls the council, states the certain day?
Who forms the phalanx, and who points the way?’

“The storks have long and rather thick

necks and long and slender legs. They belong chiefly to the warmer climates of the old continent, where they mostly reside in marshy places, feeding on fishes, frogs, lizards, and sometimes on small quadrupeds and birds. Some of the species are of gigantic size, and these are omnivorous feeders, like vultures eating dead animals and any kind of garbage, as well as vegetable substances.

“The stork is said to be a very silent bird; the only noise it ever makes is a peculiar rattling with the bill, something like the sound made by castanets. When it is angry or agitated the head is thrown back, so that the lower jaw appears uppermost, the bill lies flat on the back, and the two mandibles, or jaws, striking violently together, produce this clattering noise. Before they leave Europe in the autumn, the storks assemble in great numbers and appear to hold consultations, and then this noise is very loud and continuous:

“‘The stork assembly meet for many a day,
Consulting deep and various, ere they take
Their arduous voyage through the liquid sky.’

“ They go in large flocks and betake themselves to Africa and Asia. As they are most useful as destroyers of reptiles, they receive a warm welcome wherever they go, and are allowed to build their nests where they like. They become very familiar and fearless, often taking up their quarters in towers and making their large flat nests upon the chimneys and other high parts of buildings. These nests are made of sticks and twigs on the outside, and are lined with straw and dry herbage. Three or four greenish-white eggs are laid, and the young are so carefully tended by the parents that the stork has become an emblem of parental love.



THE STORK (*Ciconia alba*).

"A stork-mother has been seen to stand for a long time and watch her nestlings, as though they were the most interesting objects in the world. She had built her nest on the top of a ruin, and her awkward-looking babies would occasionally put their heads out to see what was going on below them. Mamma Stork made no objection to this, unless some stroller approached too near her nursery, when she always rose up and pushed the youngsters down out of sight. Then she would sit gazing around as though there were no young storks in existence, snapping her bill until the intruder was out of sight.

"When the town of Delft, in Holland, was half destroyed by fire, in 1536, a stork who had been absent for some time looking for food returned to her nest to find in flames the house on which it was built. At first she tried to get her young ones away from the burning building, but the poor little things could not fly; and, finding that it was impossible to save them, the mother-bird covered them over with her body and stayed there to be burned with

her nestlings rather than leave them. It is said that the young storks return the affection lavished upon them, and show their gratitude by taking care of their parents in their old age, even carrying them on their backs when they are unable to fly.

“‘The stork’s an emblem of true piety,
Because, when age has seized and made his dam
Unfit for flight, the grateful young one takes
His mother on his back, provides her food,
Repaying thus her tender care of him
Ere he was fit to fly.’

“The stork was particularly respected by the Jews for this reason; they called it *chaseda*—which in English means ‘pity’ or ‘mercy.’—from the tenderness shown by the young to the old birds.

“In the Mohammedan town of Fez, on the coast of Barbary, there is a fine hospital built for the sole purpose of nursing sick cranes and storks and of burying them when dead. The respect which is there shown them arises from the belief that storks are human beings in that form—men from some distant islands who at certain seasons of the year assume the

shape of these birds that they may visit Barbary and return at a fixed time to their own country, where they again take their own form."

"Did any one ever see this hospital?" asked Malcolm; while his little sisters evidently thought that the storks and the cranes were to be seen there lying in little white beds "all in a row," like the sick children they had visited at a hospital in the city.

"Yes," was the reply; "travelers are allowed to visit it. And there is another hospital for disabled animals in India, where people have the same strange ideas. The Turks, too, have a great respect for the stork, and throughout the whole country, wherever he goes on his summer visits, he is treated with high consideration. They call him their friend and their brother, and they fully believe that he will not build his nest on a Christian roof. 'In the Turkish quarter,' says a traveler, 'they were met with in all directions, strutting about most familiarly, mixing with the people in the streets, but rarely entering the

parts of the town inhabited by the Greeks or Armenians, by whom, possibly, they may be occasionally disturbed. Nothing can be more interesting than the view of an assemblage of their nests. Divided as the storks always are into pairs, sometimes only the long, elastic neck of one of them is to be seen peering from its cradle of nestlings, the male standing by on one of his long, slim legs and watching with every sign of the closest affection. Other couples, on the adjacent walls, are fondly entwining their pliant necks and mixing their long bills; while from the holes and crannies of the walls below the stork's nest thousands of little blue turtle-doves flit in all directions, keeping up an incessant cooing by day and night.'

"In Holland boxes are often placed on the roofs for storks to build in, and it is thought to be a fortunate thing for the household when the box is occupied. The Germans look upon the stork as a sort of guardian angel, and fully believe that the particular bird which builds its nest on their chimney is deeply interested in their

household affairs. German children all believe that the good stork brings their baby-brothers and sisters on his back from among the lily-buds by the river, and it is thought that if any wrong is committed in a house the stork is sure to know it. It is such a very well-behaved bird that it is supposed to have a particular hatred to evil-doers.

“Queer stories are told of the stork’s gratitude for kindness, and among others there is an account of a pair whose young ones were every year destroyed by a huge serpent that contrived to work itself into the nest. But one year the unfortunate parents returned from their winter trip with a bird that had never been seen there before: it was shorter than a stork, and had a great sharp beak like a sword. When the nestlings were of a nice size for eating, the serpent appeared, as usual; but the strange bird was on the lookout for him, and there was a terrible battle, in which the reptile was killed. But the brave bird had been so severely bitten by the poisonous snake that all its feathers fell off. The grateful storks would not

leave their benefactor, but took care of him, and put off their flitting until his feathers grew again and he could go with them, when the whole party flew off together.

“A more improbable story is that of the stork that had its leg broken by a stone that was thrown at it. The poor bird got to its nest as best it could, and lay there helpless. The woman of the house saw its wretched plight and set its leg, feeding it until it was quite cured; so that when the season for leaving came, it was able to fly away with its companions. In the spring this same stork returned to its old quarters—the woman who had tended it knew it at once by its lame way of walking—and, approaching her with many gesticulations, from its bill it dropped at her feet the finest diamond it had been able to pick up in its travels.”

“Miss Harson,” said Clara, very gravely, “do you think that story is true?”

“No, my dear, I do not,” was the reply; “but, as animals often show gratitude for kindness, it is quite likely that so intelligent

a bird as the stork is capable of feeling it too. Another stork is said to have brought with him every spring a root of ginger, which he presented to the master of the house where he dwelt; and some one tells this funny little narrative: 'There was an ancient stork that had nested for I don't know how many years on one particular house. This well-bred bird never returned in the spring without stalking about before the door and clattering his bill till the master came out, when Stork clattered more than ever, as much as to say, "The top of the morning to you, sir! Here I am again." To which the master would reply, "Ah, old fellow! how are you?" When autumn came, the same ceremony was gone through, the stork clattering "Good-bye, Your Honor!" and the master saying, "A pleasant journey to you, old boy!"'

"The disposition of this bird is said to be particularly mild—neither shy nor savage. It will become very tame and is often trained to live in gardens, which it clears of insects and reptiles. It has a grave, even a mournful, expression, but this does

not appear to denote its character, as it is quite capable of joining in scenes of gayety, even taking part in and imitating the frolics of children. A tame stork was actually seen in a garden playing 'hide-and-seek' with the children of the family ; it would run in its turn when touched, and kept as clear of the child whose turn it was to pursue the rest as if it had been gifted with human intelligence.

"On the coast of Africa and in the Cape Verd Islands there are some beautiful storks called 'sea-peacocks.' They are about four feet high, and are remarkable for their light and elegant shape and for the variety and the grace of their attitudes. Their color is generally black mixed with white, and their heads are adorned with a tuft of short velvety black feathers. When they run, they stretch out their wings and go very swiftly ; but the tame ones walk about very deliberately among other poultry, and will let people come as close to them as they like. When they go to rest they select a high wall, on which they perch in the style of the peacock."

There was a great excitement among the children over the stork that played "hide-and-seek." They agreed that they would like to secure such a playmate, but Miss Harson laughingly told them that it was of no use, as such a bird was not to be had.

CHAPTER XXIII.

THREE MORE STALKERS: THE IBIS, THE SNIPE AND THE WOODCOCK.

“THE ibis,” said Miss Harson, “is another peculiar bird of the heron family, and I want you particularly to notice the strange shape of his bill in the picture.”

The children saw that, besides being very long, it was curved like a sickle, and that in shape the bird resembled the stork.

“The Egyptian ibis,” continued the governess, “is of a reddish-white color and over a yard in length. It has very long, slender legs, and these and its peculiar bill give the bird an extremely awkward appearance. It is occasionally found in some countries of Europe during the summer months, but migrates, on the approach

of cold weather, to India and Egypt. In this last country it was called the sacred ibis, and was worshiped before Christianity reached the Egyptians."

"What made them worship such an awkward bird?" asked Malcolm. "What good did it do them?"

"They fancied that it did a great deal," was the reply; "but it is known to destroy poisonous serpents and other reptiles, and this was probably one of the reasons for its worship. Another cause is said to be its fancied resemblance to the moon, from the curved and crescent shape of its beak. The moon was an object of worship among many heathen nations in the ancient times, especially among the Egyptians, from the fancy among them that the moon in its crescent-form resembled the boat or ark in which Noah and his family were saved from the Flood.

"Job is speaking of this idolatry when he says: 'If I beheld the sun when it shined, or the moon walking in brightness, and my heart hath been secretly enticed, or my mouth hath kissed my

hand; this also were an iniquity to be punished.*

“This bird also formed part of the idol-abominations alluded to in the vision of the prophet Ezekiel, and St. Paul accuses the Gentiles of ‘changing the glory of the un-



THE SACRED IBIS (*Ibis religiosa*).

‘corruptible God into an image made like to corruptible man and to birds.’

“The ibis is found in the countries bordering on the river Nile, and it comes down from Ethiopia when the river rises. For this reason the Arabs call it ‘Father of

* Job xxxi. 26, etc.

the Sickle,' because the fruits of the harvest come from the overflowing of the Nile. 'Looking upon the ibis, therefore, as a type or emblem of the moon, and again associating its appearance on the banks of the river Nile at a season reminding them of the approach of those abundant crops produced by the inundations of their sacred river, we can easily see the reason why the priests of the country held it up to the ignorant people as a bird sent from heaven, and therefore to be worshiped in life and honored in death.'

"Here are some lines," continued Miss Harson, "in which the ibis is mentioned in connection with Egypt and Nubia:

"'Far down in Nubia's waste gray temples stand,
Tottering with age, each doorway choked with sand,
And farther on, in groups against the sky,
Long lines of pyramids ascend on high,
By all forsaken save by beasts of prey
And that dark bird—a god in ancient day—
Whose voice still sounds, as shadowy twilight falls,
Like a ghost's wail along the lonely walls.'

"Do any of you know what a mummy is?" asked the governess.

Malcolm said that he did ; he had seen mummies at the museum.

Miss Harson explained, for the benefit of the little ones, that a mummy was a dead body preserved with spices and gums and having a great many folds of cloth wrapped round and round it.

“And now,” said she, “you will understand when I tell you that the ibis, when dead, was made into mummies with precious ointments and



MUMMY-CASES.

spices, and buried by the Egyptians with as grand funeral ceremonies as were performed for kings and princes. These embalmed, or mummied, ibises are sometimes found now in costly tombs ; and they show what heathen folly could do in the way of creature-worship.”

When this strange bird had been wondered over, Miss Harson turned to a picture of some plump-looking little birds with the

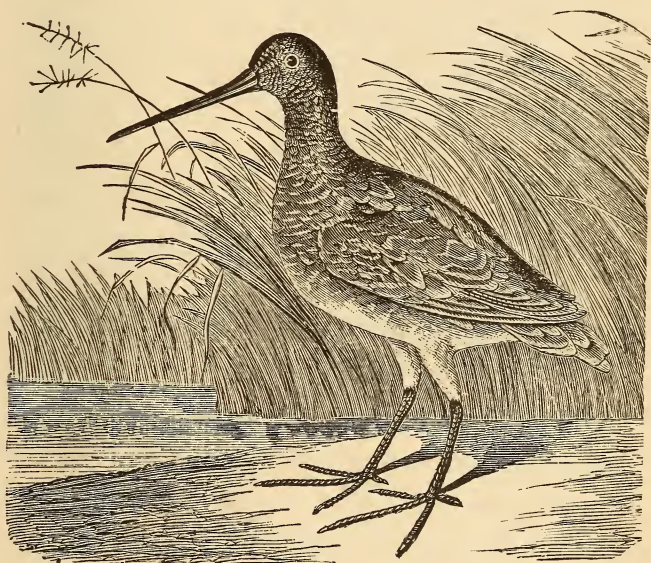
same immense bills in proportion to their size, and the same long thin legs, as the large birds they had been considering.

“These are snipes and woodcocks,” said the governess, “and they belong to the same family, in the way of bills and legs, which entitle them to be called stalkers, as the herons and cranes. They are found on both sides of the ocean, in Great Britain and in our own country as well as in other places, and are great favorites as game-birds.

“Snipes are very retiring in their habits, and like the neighborhood of swamps and bogs; they also frequent ditches and brooks, where they can cover themselves from sight with a thick growth of rushes and rank herbage. ‘They seek their food in a quiet, sedate manner, and singly. Thrusting their long, delicately-sensitive, probe-like bills into the sand or mud, they suck up, as it were, the worms and larvæ while the bill is yet immersed. They do not appear to pick up insects on the surface, or to search the open parts except by night. When alarmed in their retreats,

they do not fly up, but generally sit close and motionless.'

"The common snipe is only about eleven inches long, and its bill is twice as long as its head. Its plumage is black and brown,



THE SNIPE (*Scolopax*).

mixed with a little dusky gray and light red. This bird has a peculiar cry, which has been compared to the distant bleating of a goat on the hillside; it is thought to be made by a quick motion of the wings while flying.

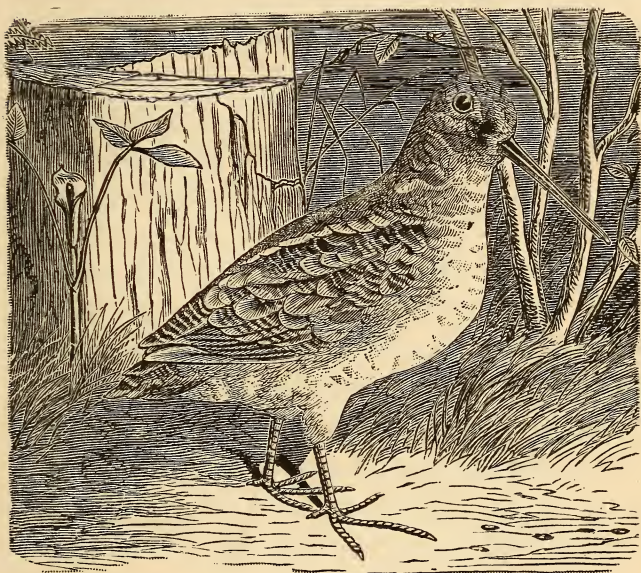
‘Toward evening it leaves its marshy couch and rises to a great height in the air, where it continues to wheel in circuitous flight for a considerable time, mostly confining itself within the limits of a large circle and uttering almost continually a loud, sharp, monosyllabic cry like “Chic! chic! chick-a chick-a!”’ When forced to its wings, the bird, on rising from the ground, utters a shrill cry like a scream:

“‘The snipe flies screaming from the marshy verge,
And towers in airy circles o’er the wood,
Still heard at intervals; and oft returns,
And stoops as bent to alight; then wheels aloft
With sudden fear, and screams and stoops again,
Her favorite glade reluctant to forsake.’

“The snipe’s nest is made of a few pieces of dead grass or dry herbage, in a hollow on the ground or beside a tuft of grass or rushes. There are four pale-greenish or yellowish eggs spotted at one end with brown. The nests are generally found in grassy pastures or lonely moors.

“The woodcock is not unlike the snipe, though stouter and larger. Its habits are very much the same. It, too, inhabits

marshy places, moors and woods, rests generally by day and seeks its food at night by thrusting its long bill into the mud



THE WOODCOCK (*Scolopax rusticola*).

or earth. Like the snipe, it seeks a warmer or colder climate, according to the season. British farmers are said to watch its movements with much interest, believing that

“ ‘The woodcock’s early visit and abode
For long continuance in our temperate clime
Foretell a liberal harvest.’

“The head and the bill of the woodcock have been compared to the bowl and the stem of a pipe, and in looking at the picture of the bird we see that the resemblance is quite strong. ‘The colors of the woodcock’s plumage are sober and subdued, like those of the partridge; but their general harmony and the grace and delicacy of the pencilings render it as beautiful a bird as it is a highly-valued one for the table.’

“The woodcock does not fly so rapidly as the snipe, but in a more regular, sedate kind of way; and it walks with a great deal of ease, getting over the ground very quickly when there is occasion for it. It readily goes into the water, but is not particularly fond of wading, as its food principally consists of the common earth-worm.

“This bird’s nest is sometimes found on the edge of thickets, and sometimes in open places. It is only a slight hollow lined with small twigs and leaves, and there are usually four yellowish-white, spotted eggs.

“In the wood which gives them their name — ‘woodcock’ — through the long sunny hours,

“ ‘There rest they till the closing day
The signal gives to seek their prey
Where the long worm and shrouded fly
Close in their marshy burrows lie,
Then issue forth by Nature’s power
To banquet through the midnight hour,
Till the gray dawn their ardor daunt,
And warn them to their woodland haunt.
Mysterious power, which guides by night
Through the dark wood the illumined sight,
Which prompts them by the unerring smell
The appointed prey’s abode to tell,
Bore with long bill the investing mould,
And feel, and from the secret hold
Dislodge, the reptile spoil! But who
Can look creation’s volume through,
And not fresh proofs at every turn
Of the Creator’s mind discern—
The end to which his actions tend;
The means adjusted to the end;
The reasoning thought; the effective skill;
And, ruling all, the Almighty’s will?’ ”

CHAPTER XXIV.

A GREAT DEAL OF BILL: THE TOUCAN.

“**H**ERE,” said Miss Harson, “is something that looks like an immense bill with a small bird attached to it. Is it not a funny object?”

“‘Funny’ is not the right word,” thought the children as they burst into peals of laughter over the toucan’s picture; while Malcolm asked in quite a knowing way,

“Is he another ‘stalker,’ Miss Harson?”

“No,” was the reply, “and he does not properly belong here at all; but I have been reading some interesting descriptions of him to-day, and I thought that on account of his enormous bill he might be introduced after the heron family. The toucan really belongs to the pie species, though he is found only in tropical regions. A great many of these birds are

seen on the banks of the Amazon, of a larger size than elsewhere, and having on the head a curious sort of crest like a curled twig. Instead of feathers, this crest is formed of thin horny plates of a lustrous black and curled up at the ends



THE TOUCAN (*Rhamphastos Ariel*).

These plates are said to resemble shavings of steel or of ebony.

“There are several different species of toucans, and the usual colors of their plumage are black, white and red. They generally appear in little flocks of six or seven, and on retiring to rest one is appointed to watch during the night. ‘While they are

asleep he sits perched at the top of a tree above them, and makes a continual noise resembling ill-articulated sounds, moving also his head during the whole time to the right and left. For this reason the South Americans give to the toucan the name of "preacher-toucan."

"These birds do not fly easily, and seem to find being on the wing rather hard work; they manage, however, to elevate themselves into the tops of the highest trees, where they are particularly fond of perching, and keep up a constant commotion. 'Sometimes a little band of four or five is seen perched for hours together amongst the topmost branches of high trees, giving vent to their remarkably loud, shrill, yelping cries, one bird, mounted higher than the rest, acting, apparently, as leader of the inharmonious chorus; but two of them are often heard yelping alternately and in different notes.'

"The toucan lives chiefly on fruit and is especially fond of grapes. If these are plucked from the stalk and thrown to it one by one, the bird will catch them with great dexterity before they fall to the

ground. It is quite amusing to read that the toucan is constantly changing its quarters to follow up the different fruits as they ripen, going northward or southward as the crop promises best. When tamed, it is said to eat anything that is offered it.

“But sad stories are told of the toucans in regard to their preying upon smaller birds, of which they are said to destroy immense quantities. That dreadful bill makes them a terror to other species, which they attack and drive from their nests, even devouring their eggs and young ones before their eyes. The latter they draw out of holes with the aid of their long bill, or bring nests and all to the ground together.

“There is a bird called the ‘bee-eater’ which builds so solid a nest of clay that neither time nor the elements seem to make any impression on it; but even this is not safe from the attacks of the toucans. They take the opportunity when the clay is somewhat softened by rain to batter it with continued strokes of their bills, that they may get at and devour the eggs and young.”

"I don't like toucans now," said little Edith, looking disgustedly at the huge bill; "it is so wicked of them to eat up the poor little birds!"

"Who eats chickens, I should like to know?" asked Malcolm.

His little sister looked quite troubled as she replied, after a moment's thought,

"Well, I don't eat 'em *raw*."

Edith could not see why every one should laugh, and Miss Harson smiled kindly on her little pupil as she continued:

"We shall have to forgive them, dear, when we remember that they do not know any better. Sometimes, too, they are attacked themselves. Their nests are built in the holes of trees, sometimes made by themselves, after the fashion of the woodpecker, and sometimes found ready made. The toucan takes excellent care of its nursery, but it has many enemies to guard against—not only birds, men and serpents, but a numerous train of *monkeys*, still more prying, mischievous and hungry than all the rest. The toucan, however, sits in its hole, defending the entrance with its great beak;

and if the monkey venture to offer a visit of curiosity, the toucan gives him such a welcome that he is soon glad to make his escape.'

"The flesh of this bird is considered very delicate; and this and the beauty of its plumage, particularly the feathers of the breast, make it much sought after. The South American Indians pluck off the skin of this part and glue it to their cheeks; they consider these ornaments highly becoming.

"In eating, the toucans use their huge bills with great dexterity. They seize any morsels which are presented to them with the point, throw them upward, and, opening their mouths, receive them in their gullet. If they seek their food on the ground, they usually take it up sideways, fling it into the air, and catch it in the same way.

"Here is a little account of a tame toucan that was found seated gravely on a low branch close to the road, and which proved to be a runaway pet bird. The poor thing was in a half-starved condition, but regained its health and spirits after a

few days of good living, and became a very amusing pet.

“‘I allowed Tocáno,’ says his master, ‘to go free about the house, contrary to my usual practice with pet animals; he never, however, mounted my working-table after a smart correction which he received the first time he did so. He used to sleep on the top of a box in a corner of the room in the usual position of these birds—namely, with the long tail laid right over the back and the beak thrust underneath the wing. He ate of everything that we eat—beef, turtle, fish, farina, fruit—and was a constant attendant at our table, a cloth spread on a mat. His appetite was most ravenous, and his powers of digestion were quite wonderful.

“‘He got to know the meal-hours to a nicety, and we found it very difficult, after the first week or two, to keep him away from the dining-room, where he had become very impudent and troublesome. We tried to shut him out by enclosing him in the back-yard, which was separated by a high fence from the street on which our front

door opened; but he used to climb the fence and hop round by a long circuit to the dining-room, making his appearance with the greatest punctuality as the meal was placed on the table.

“ ‘He afterward acquired the habit of rambling about the street near our house, and one day he was stolen and given up for lost. But two days afterward he stepped through the open doorway at dinner-hour with his old gait and sly, magpie-like expression, having escaped from the house where he had been guarded by the person who had stolen him, and which was situated at the farther end of the village.’ ”

“Can toucans talk, Miss Harson?” asked Clara, evidently taken with the idea of a “magpie-like expression.”

“Not that I have ever heard of,” was the laughing reply, “and really, on the whole, dear, I think it is a good thing that there are no more talkers in the world.”

CHAPTER XXV.

FISHING FOR A LIVING: THE PELICAN, THE CORMORANT AND THE GANNET.

“THE pelican family,” said Miss Har-
son, “are not handsome, but their
peculiarities make them quite interesting.
Pelicans, cormorants, gannets, the frigate-



THE PELICAN.

bird and the tropic-
bird are all classed
together, but their
habits are very dif-
ferent. They all feed
on fish, however, and
are all very voracious.
They nestle on rocks,
bushes or trees, form
a clumsy, ill-constructed nest and lay a
small number of bluish-white eggs.”

The children pronounced the pelicans
“dreadful-looking birds;” and their bills,

with a great pouch underneath, certainly did look very formidable.

“This enormous bill,” continued Miss Harson, “is fifteen inches long and has on the under-side a bag, or pouch, reaching the whole length of the bill to the neck. It is not covered with feathers, but with a short downy substance as smooth and soft as satin.

“The plumage of the pelican is generally of a light and delicate flesh-color, varied with occasional darker tinges, and the pouch is of a bright straw-color. In the island of Manilla these birds are rose-colored, and in some other places they are brown. They are found in the West Indies and in Asia as well as in Europe, and in some parts of America.

“For so large a bird—six feet from the point of the bill to the end of the tail—the pelican is wonderfully light, its bones and feathers, as well as the space between the skin and the flesh, being all reservoirs of air; on this account it frequently rises in the air to an immense height. But pelicans are represented as very inactive birds; so

that nothing but their gluttony can exceed their indolence. It is only hunger that rouses them to exert themselves; and, as they get their living by fishing, their very lightness prevents them from diving under the water. But that wonderful instinct with which the Creator has endowed his creatures comes to their aid and teaches them how to gain their object.

“‘The pelicans, aware of their inability to catch their prey under water, in consequence of this buoyancy, adopt an equally certain mode of supplying themselves. Assembling in flocks, they unite their forces, and, surrounding a school of fish, strike the water with their wings and with the noisy splashing frighten and drive them into a narrower compass; so that the school at length becomes much compressed. The upper part is thus raised by the lower, when, at a certain signal, all the pelicans strike the water again and in the general confusion fill their pouches, then devour the contents at their leisure.’”

“How funny,” exclaimed Malcolm, “for a bird to have a bag to go fishing with!”

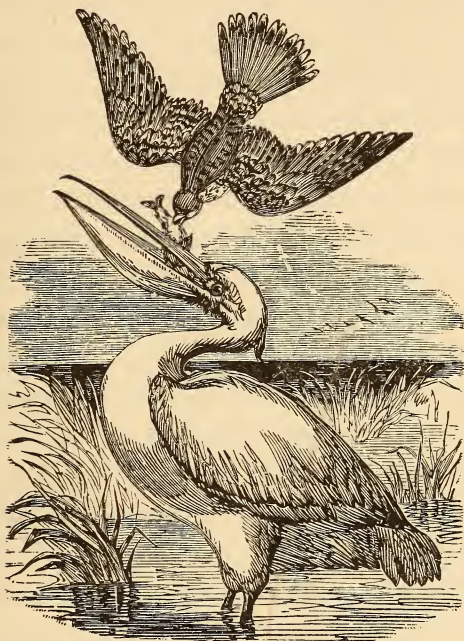
“It must indeed be a comical sight; and the Russians—who have excellent opportunities of observing their habits, as immense flights of these birds arrive every year from the Black Sea and the Sea of Azof and alight at the mouth of the river Don—say that the pelicans take the cormorants into partnership on these fishing-excursions. The pelican spreads its wings and flaps the water, while the cormorant, diving below, drives the fish to the surface; and when, between them both, the school is driven into the shallows and easily seized by the pelican and stowed away in his bag, the cormorant helps himself out of his companion’s wide pouch.

“They will continue to work with great industry until their bags are filled, when they fly away to the land to feed at their leisure. They are great eaters; and their immense pouches—which are said to hold fish enough to make a good meal for a number of men—are generally replenished twice a day.

“The pelicans of the West Indies are heavier, and so are able to dive under

the water. After bringing up their pouches full of fish, they will good-naturedly allow the parasite-gulls—who are so called because they live on the labor of others—to settle on their heads and share the spoil. But the Eastern pelicans reverse this, and themselves settle on the bodies of animals. ‘On the banks of the river Tigris, in Asia, which is the favorite resort of a species of pelican, they may be seen in great numbers, spreading their silvery wings and quietly settled on the backs of the buffaloes which are plunging into the water and patiently accommodating themselves to this encumbrance. We know that cows will allow of magpies sitting on their backs and pecking holes in their hides; for which they ought to be grateful, as the magpie is doing the poor beast an essential service by ridding it of the grub of the gad-fly, the sound made by even one of which will send a herd off at full gallop with their tails in the air. But, as the pelican’s beak is by no means fitted for boring into the tough coat of a buffalo, we cannot account for the apparent satisfaction expressed by the

animal on its making this settlement. Sometimes hawks avail themselves of the



PELICAN AND HAWK.

labors of the pelicans, snatching fish out of their very mouths.'

"The pelican makes no preparation for a nest, and does not seem to prefer one place above another in which to lay her eggs. Five or six are deposited at once

on the bare ground, and there they are hatched.

“Many curious stories are told of this bird, and a favorite one is that of its drawing blood from its own breast to feed its young ones, which arose from its habit of pressing its long beak on its breast to disgorge the food it had prepared for them. They have also been said to act as water-carriers to the camels in the desert, where they scoop out holes in the sand and fill them with water carried in their pouches for the use of their little ones; but it is very sensibly suggested that a camel would at one draught swallow all the water that could be carried by a whole flock of pelicans.

“They appear to be fond of their young. A case is mentioned where the nestlings were taken and tied by the leg to a post. The mother came for several days and fed them, staying with them during most of the day and spending the night on the branch of a tree that hung over them. In this way they became so tame that they did not mind being handled, and readily

accepted any fish that was offered them. These they always first put into their pouch, and then swallowed them at their leisure.

“A traveler tells a remarkable story of a tame pelican among the Indians that was so well trained that it would go off in the morning at the word of command and return before night to its master with its great pouch full of fish, a part of which the savage would make it give up, while it was allowed to keep a portion for itself. Another pelican is mentioned as having lived for forty years at the court of the duke of Bavaria, displaying quite human propensities. It was said to delight in the company and conversation of men and to show a decided taste for music, both vocal and instrumental; ‘for it would willingly stand by those that sung or sounded the trumpet, and, stretching out its head and turning its ear to the music, would listen very attentively to its harmony, though its own voice was little pleasanter than the braying of an ass.’ The emperor Maximilian is said to have had a tame

pelican that lived over eighty years and always attended his army on its march."

The children decided that the "dreadful-looking bird" had turned out to be very amusing, and that after this, when they saw a favorite picture of a pelican that seemed to be pecking its breast to feed its young ones, they would know what it meant.

"There are other members of the pelican family," continued their governess, "and next on the list comes the cormorant, who has a bad reputation as a particularly greedy bird. He is only about half the size of the real pelican, and is also distinguished from the larger bird by having one of his four toes—which are webbed together—notched like a saw. This is a great help to the birds in holding the slippery bodies of small fish, also in clinging to branches; 'for, although they usually frequent rocks and precipices, they can, and very often do, perch on trees.'

"The cormorant has a sooty-black head and neck and a thick, heavy body, being

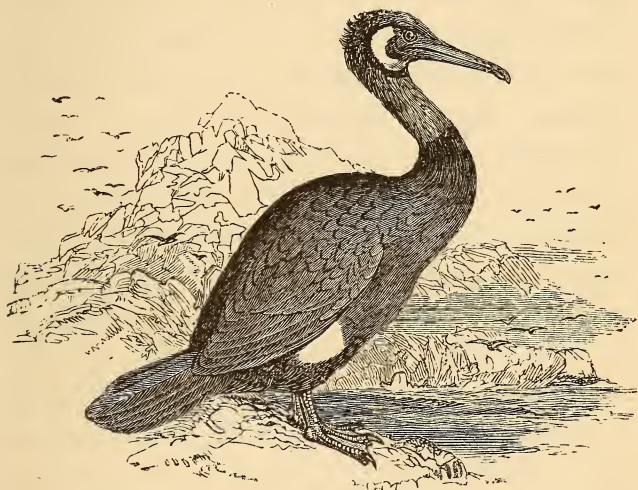
shaped very much like a goose. He is a great glutton, and the expression 'A perfect cormorant' means a very gross eater. He has been called 'the raven of the sea,' and is said to feed on all sorts of carrion, although his diet principally consists of fish. The quantity of food devoured by this bird in a day is astonishing—equal to seventy or eighty pounds of meat for a man in the same time ; and if it is deprived of a sufficient supply, it very soon dies.

“ On the western coast of the Hebrides these poor birds suffer severely when, during and after a continued gale, the Atlantic rolls in its enormous billows, dashing them against the headlands and scouring with their fury the sands and creeks. As far as the eye can reach the ocean boils and heaves, presenting one boundless field of foam, the spray from the summits of the waves sweeping along the waste like drifted snow. No sign of life is to be seen save when a gull, laboring hard to bear itself up against the blast, hovers overhead or darts by like a meteor. If, at such a season, the haunts of the cormorants are

visited, the birds will be found huddled together in their caves and crevices, perishing with hunger and their numbers daily thinning by death. If, indeed, they could venture out and bear the buffeting of the storm, they would still fail in procuring food; for as in fishing these birds always carry their heads under water, in order that with their keen, clear and beautiful eye they may discover their prey at a greater distance, in such commotions of the air and water they would need even a quicker glance than they possess.'

"Cormorants are found in many parts of the world; and in lonely places on a shore, or a little way out in the water, they may be seen perched on rocks or ledges watching for fish. In China they are trained to fish for their owner, and the same thing used to be done in England, where there was an officer of the royal household who was called 'master of the cormorants.' Of their fishing it is said: 'It is very pleasant to behold with what sagacity they portion out the lake or the canal where they are upon duty. When they

have found their prey, they seize it with their beak by the middle, and carry it without fail to their master. When the fish is too large, they then give each other mutual assistance: one seizes it by the head, the other by the tail, and in this manner they



THE FISHING CORMORANT (*Phalacrocorax sinensis*).

carry it to the boat together. They have always, while they fish, a string fastened round their throats to prevent them from devouring their prey.'"

The children were very much entertained by the fishing-propensities of the pelican

family, and Malcolm inquired, with quite a grown-up air, if these stories about them were strictly true.

“I see no good reason to doubt them,” replied the governess, “and a very little study of the ways of birds and animals will make us ready to credit them with almost human powers. There is a fable, however, about the cormorant in connection with his fishing. It says that he was once a wool-merchant. He entered into partnership with the bramble and the bat, and they freighted a large vessel with wool. She struck on some rocks and went to the bottom, and this loss caused the firm to become bankrupt. Since that disaster the bat skulks in his hiding-hole until twilight, in order that he may avoid his creditors; the bramble seizes hold of every passing sheep to make up his loss by retaining part of its wool; while the cormorant is for ever diving into the waters of the deep, in hopes of discovering where his foundered vessel lies.

“The cormorant may be justly styled the feathered terror of the finny tribe. His

skill in diving is admirable, and his success beyond belief. You may know him at a distance, among a thousand water-fowl, by his upright neck, by his body being apparently half immersed in the water, and by his being perpetually in motion when not on land. While the ducks and teals and widgeons are stationary on the pool, the cormorant is seen swimming to and fro "as if in quest of something." First raising his body nearly perpendicular, down he plunges into the deep, and after staying there a considerable time he is sure to bring up a fish, which he invariably swallows headforemost.'

"The cormorant's nest is made of thick sticks, plants from the rocks, grass and a little wool. Sometimes there are four eggs or young ones, and sometimes only one. The young ones are covered with a black down, and their long necks and long wing-bones give them a very queer appearance.

"Cormorants, when tamed, make nice pets, unless they get very hungry, when they become outrageous and scream violently. A gentleman's servant, who wore plush

clothes of a red color, was mistaken by a pair of tame cormorants for a huge piece of raw flesh—the food to which they were accustomed—and the two made such a furious attack upon him that their owner had to come to his aid with a stick. Even then they were not easily driven off. They paid Mrs. Puss for her cruelties to small birds by eating her whenever they got a chance, and dogs and poultry fared just as badly. So that, on the whole,” added Miss Harson, “I am afraid we cannot present the cormorant in a very amiable light.”

“‘The gannet, or solan goose,’” read Malcolm at the next picture. “Is that a nice bird, Miss Harson?”

“It is not a particularly interesting one,” was the reply, “except from the immense flocks in which it is seen and the vast quantities of eggs which it, with other sea-fowl, deposits on inaccessible rocks. It is about the size of an ordinary goose, but its wings are much larger, as the gannet is what may be called ‘a high flyer,’ and can traverse the wide surface of the ocean with comparative ease.

“All the movements of the gannet on land are very awkward; it hobbles and waddles when it tries to walk, stares at you



GANNET OR SOLAN GOOSE (*Sula bassana*).

with its goggle white eyes, opens its black throat and emits a torrent of cackling sounds. But how different it is when on wing or in the water! How buoyantly it

floats on either element! How rapidly it plunges or dives in pursuit of its prey!

“These birds are nearly all white and lay a single white egg, but so many of them are found together in their nesting-places among the steep rocks that the eggs are quite a source of profit. They are fond of uninhabited islands where plenty of fish is to be found, and where their human enemies seldom come to disturb them. Islands on the coast of Scotland and Ireland, and in the North Sea off Norway, abound with them. But it is said that ‘it is scarcely possible to walk on Bass Island, in the Firth of Edinburgh, without treading on them. The flocks of birds upon the wing are so numerous as to darken the air like a cloud, and their noise is such that one cannot without difficulty be heard by the person next to him.’

“The tropic-bird is so called from being found chiefly within the tropics. It is about three feet long, and its plumage is white and black. It is always seen far away from land, where the other winged inhabitants of the air are seldom visible, and every one

on board a ship will hasten to get a glimpse of him as he wings his lonely way over the ocean. On the coast of Cayenne, in South America, there is a rock of enormous size that at some distance from the shore rises out of the ocean like a water-giant of the first magnitude. Multitudes of sea-fowl make their nests among the ledges of this rock, and here the tropic-bird is said to lay its eggs and rear its young.

“The frigate pelican, or man-of-war bird, is also found between the tropics, and is about the size of a large fowl. Its plumage is brownish black, and it has a long forked tail. It has a large pouch, or bag, like the pelican; and when it does not succeed in its own fishing, it attacks smaller water-fowl and makes them give up the fish which they have taken. Its wings are of an immense length—not less than fourteen feet, and, being capable of long-continued flights, it is found at a great distance from land, and sometimes settles on the masts of ships.”

“I didn’t know,” said Clara, when the account of the pelican family was finished,

"that there were so many queer birds in the world."

"There are a great many more than we shall at present be able to talk about," replied Miss Harson. "We are only learning about such birds as you will be likely frequently to read of; and when you are older you will be able to explore for yourselves the wonders of natural history."

CHAPTER XXVI.

ON STILTS: THE FLAMINGO.

“**H**ERE is a very strange-looking and beautiful bird,” said Miss Harson one evening; “and when you have examined it, you will not wonder at its name. It is called the flamingo; and its Greek name, *Phænicopterus*, means ‘wings of flame.’”

The bird certainly had a beautiful body with snowy plumage, except the wings, which were of a bright carnation-color. But its immensely long, thin legs made it look queer enough. The children were not surprised to hear that at a little distance, and standing as birds of this kind often do—on one leg only—it seems to be without any support at all, but just to hang in the air.

“You see what a curious beak it has.

It is like a large black box of an irregular shape. To collect food in the ordinary way with such an arrangement as this would be no easy matter, as it would be sure, when collected, to drop out of the bird's mouth. Its instinct teaches it to turn its head and scoop up the soft substances on which it preys, using the upper part of the bill as a sort of spoon. Very few birds could do this; but you see what a very long, slender neck the flamingo has—almost as slender as those remarkable legs. This odd bill can be made useful in various ways. A captive flamingo that had lost a leg managed to walk very well with the other by using its bill as a crutch, and it seemed to be quite as helpful as a wooden leg would have been."

"A wooden leg!" exclaimed the two little ones. "Oh, Miss Harson, did a bird ever have a wooden leg?"

"Yes," was the reply. "Only the other day I read of a crane that had one of his legs broken and cut off above the knee, and it was furnished with a wooden leg so nicely made that the bird could walk

and use it as well as if it had been a natural one."

The children began to think that wonders



THE FLAMINGO (*Phœnicopterus*).

would never cease in the way of birds ; and it certainly did look like it.

"The flamingo," continued Miss Harson, "is also remarkable in having its feet web-

bed like those of the goose, as if intended for swimming, while its immensely long legs belong to the class of waders. It is never seen swimming, as its legs and thighs are sufficient to bear it into those depths where it seeks for prey. This bird is one of the tallest and most beautiful of water-fowl; and when it stands erect, it is six feet six inches high. Its legs comprise nearly three feet of this, and its neck is just about as long.

“The flamingo used to abound on all the coasts of Europe, but it is now found chiefly in South America, though occasionally met with on the shores of the Mediterranean. ‘Its beauty, its size and the peculiar delicacy of its flesh have been such temptations to destroy or take it that it has long since deserted the shores frequented by man and taken refuge in countries that are as yet but thinly peopled.’

“It has happened very much with this bird as it did with the savages, who at first were not suspicious of white men. We are told that ‘when the Europeans first came to America and coasted down

along the African shores, they found the flamingoes in several places on either continent gentle and in no way distrustful of mankind. When the fowler had killed one, the rest of the flock, far from attempting to fly, only regarded the fall of their companion in a kind of fixed astonishment. Another and another shot was discharged, and thus the fowler often leveled the whole flock before one of them began to think of escaping.' Now it is very different, and the flamingoes have become so shy that it is almost impossible to approach them; they keep themselves retired among the most deserted shores. They are fond of salt-water lakes and swampy islands. Large flocks of them—as many as two and three hundred together—are often seen from ships, drawn up in a long, close line, and from the distance of half a mile they are said to look exactly like a brick wall.

“But a much prettier description of these handsome birds is to say that, ‘with their bright pink and scarlet colors, they present a soldier-like appearance in addition to

further military habits they seem very generally to adopt. Not only do they always assemble in flocks, but they form in long lines of regular rank and file, as well for the purpose of fishing as for repose on the strand. Still further, after the manner of experienced soldiers, they post sentinels, who keep a good lookout, and if anything suspicious attracts their notice immediately send forth a cry like the sound of a trumpet, when the whole corps moves off in regular marching order.'"

"Wouldn't you like to see that, Miss Harson?" asked Malcolm, in great excitement.

"I should indeed," was the reply; "it would be a sight well worth seeing; and our flamingo with the ungainly bill and legs is turning out a very interesting bird. On the eastern coast of Africa the officers of a surveying-ship found these birds so numerous that every shoal was covered with them, looking, they said, at a distance, like large variegated plains, and upon a nearer approach resembling files of soldiers. When the sun was shining

on them, nothing could surpass the beauty of their brilliant and dazzling appearance.

“The tongues of flamingoes—which are a great deal larger than those of any other birds—have long been considered a great delicacy. The Roman emperors thought them the highest luxury, and one of them had fifteen hundred served up in a single dish.”

“And killed all those beautiful birds,” exclaimed Clara, sadly, “just for their tongues!”

“Tyrants, my dear child, do not stop at worse things than that to gratify their selfish fancies,” was the reply, “and all sorts of extravagances and cruelties have been committed by wicked rulers who had not the fear of God before their eyes. But we will leave them for a more pleasant subject. The flamingo’s nest, especially with the bird sitting on it, must be a very funny sight. These nests are built in large marshes, where the birds feel quite secure, and are said to be ‘not less curious than the animal that builds them.’ A mound

of mud is scraped together and raised about a foot and a half from the surface of the water; this is hardened by the sun or the heat of the bird's body, and resembles a chimney-pot. On the top it is hollowed out to the shape of the bird, and in this cavity the eggs are placed. There are always just two eggs, and the flamingo straddles on her high nest with a long leg hanging down into the water on either side. It is a long time before the young birds are able to fly, but they are said to run with wonderful swiftness. They are sometimes caught; and, instead of being shy, like the old ones, they seem quite willing to be carried off, and are very easily tamed. And now," added Miss Harson, "I think that we may feel somewhat acquainted with this strange bird, which none of us are likely ever to see alive."

CHAPTER XXVII.

SWANS AND GESE.

“**I** NEED not tell you what this is,” said Miss Harson, with a smile, as she placed before her pupils a picture of several swans in a lakelet in the park.

Even little Edith knew a swan when she saw it; and the children were all commenting upon the beauty of these birds, when they were surprised to hear their governess say,

“It will astonish you, perhaps, to hear that swans are really geese.”

“Is that what Kitty means,” asked Malcolm, after a moment of apparently deep reflection, “when she tells Jane that her swans are all geese?”

“No,” replied Miss Harson, laughing, “I do not believe that she is thinking at all of natural history when she says that. And,

besides, I think she says that Jane's 'geese are all swans.' Is not that it?"

On second thought, Malcolm decided that it was; and his governess explained that this expression is applied to people who have the habit of making out their possessions or their prospects to be much better than they are.

"But it is really true," continued Miss Harson, "that the swan is only a handsome species of goose; and it belongs to the great family of web-footed water-fowl, of which the flamingo is, perhaps, the most remarkable specimen. Swans, geese and ducks are classed together as being all swimmers and resembling one another in many of their habits. Looking upon the swan as a goose, it will be well to begin with a little study of that particular species.

"Common tame geese are, as we know, though not graceful or wise, very useful birds. In some places, their quills and feathers yield nearly as much profit as comes from the flocks and herds. These fowl are descended from the wild goose (*Anser*), of which there are several varieties,

and they are found on coasts and marshes in many different parts of the world. The flight of these birds is heavy and sedate,



THE SWAN (*Cygnus*).

rising to a great height when they are traveling any distance, at which times they advance in two lines arranged in the form of a wedge ($>$):

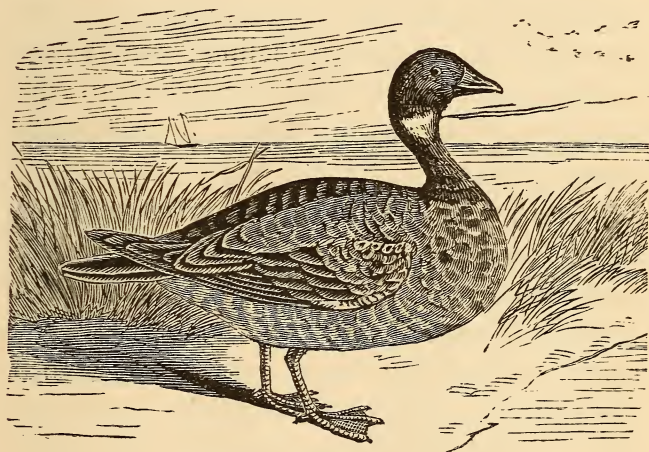
“‘Alike in wedge-like ranks aloft,
The geese, with downy plumage soft,
Or in the long-drawn column’s range,
As Nature’s dictate prompts the change,
Speed to the South on clanging pens,
To winter in the marshy fens.’

“If this flight takes place early in the season, it is thought by farmers to foretell a long and severe winter; and if they linger late, mild weather is looked for. ‘Their loud cries—rather harsh and grating when heard close at hand—are pleasant to the ear when coming from a distance, especially in the stillness of the night.’

“‘Live goose-feathers,’ meaning feathers plucked from the poor birds while they were alive, are so much used for beds, as well as for a variety of other purposes—while their quills, before steel pens were invented, were made into pens, and thus helped to do the writing of the world—that a writer of more than half a century ago says: ‘Of all the birds in the air, and all the beasts in the field, and all the fishes in the sea, and all the creatures of inferior kind who pass their lives wholly or in part, according to the different stages of their existence, in

air, earth or water,—what creature has produced, directly, the most effect upon mankind? That which you, reader, will deserve to be called if you do not, after a moment's consideration, answer the question rightly: The goose.'

"In ancient times the goose was very



WILD GOOSE (*Anser*).

highly thought of, and stories are told of its constancy and affection which sound more as if they were of a dog than of a bird. A Roman philosopher named Lacydes had a goose which took so strong a fancy to him that it would never willingly

leave him by night or by day ; wherever he chose to go, the goose was his companion. If he went abroad and walked in the public streets the bird followed him, and in his own house always forced itself into his presence. The philosopher, struck with this constant and strange attachment, seemed to consider it in some way connected with religious feeling ; and when, at last, the goose died, he went to the expense of bestowing upon it a magnificent funeral.

“Another wonderful goose belonged to a blind old German woman. Every Sunday it would lead her to church by taking hold of her dress with its bill. When she was seated, this funny attendant would go into the churchyard to graze until she came out, when it led her home again in the same way. One day the clergyman called at the old woman’s house, and expressed his surprise to her daughter that one so old and blind should venture abroad ; when she replied, ‘Oh, sir, we are not afraid of trusting her out of sight, for the gander is with her.’

“Geese have sometimes shown a strong affection for dogs. One of them belonging to a person in Scotland was observed for some time to pay particular attention to a dog which was chained up ; and, what was singular, this dog had always shown great dislike to poultry, never allowing them to come within reach of his chain. But now he seemed to have forgotten this, and received his new acquaintance with every mark of affection. The goose, finding that she had nothing to fear from her canine friend, would enter his kennel, in the centre of which, among the straw, she made her nest and deposited her eggs ; but this was not known until one of the family said that the goose slept in the dog’s bosom. The box was examined, but with considerable opposition on the part of the dog, who appeared resolved to protect what was left to his care ; and five eggs were found beneath the straw in a fine bed of down and feathers. The dog had been seen to go into his box with the greatest care, for fear of injuring the eggs.”

The little audience could here keep quiet

no longer, but became much delighted over these wonderful geese, and asked Miss Harson so many questions that she scarcely knew how to answer them. Malcolm proposed that a goose should immediately be procured and introduced to Flip, "just to see how they would get on." Miss Harson did not think they would get on at all, although she was much amused with Malcolm's evident resolve to make some experiments with geese as soon as he could get a chance.

"I didn't know that geese were so nice," said Clara; "they always hiss and run after me when I see a flock of them in the road."

"They will not do this if you step out of the way," replied her governess, "but they do not like to have their path crossed. There seems to be no good reason why the term 'goose' should be used for expressing folly, as the goose is anything but a foolish bird; and she has shown wit enough to be able to tell her own eggs from others very much like them. A goose was once set on six or eight eggs, but the dairymaid, thinking that so large a bird could just as well

cover twice as many, added an equal number of duck's eggs. The next morning she went to see if all was right, when, to her great surprise, she found the goose quiet on her nest, but every one of the duck-eggs had been picked out, and all were lying on the ground. They were put back again, but the next morning all the duck-eggs were found moved off as before and lying around the nest; while the goose was sitting on her own eggs in the most proper manner. She was not again troubled with the duck-eggs, for fear of driving her from her nest.

"But at this rate," said Miss Harson, "*our* swans seem likely to turn out geese; and we must leave the plain domestic bird, to learn something of its majestic relative. A swan gliding calmly along on the water is perhaps as beautiful and as graceful an object as is ever seen; and these birds are particularly ornamental in grounds where there is a small lake or pond.

"So much difference is there between this bird when on land and in the water that it is hardly to be supposed the same, for in the latter no bird can possibly exceed

it for beauty and majestic appearance. When it ascends from its favorite element, its motions are awkward and its neck is stretched forward with an air of stupidity: it has, indeed, the air of being only a larger sort of goose; but when seen smoothly gliding along the water, displaying a thousand graceful attitudes and moving at pleasure without the smallest apparent effort, there is not a more beautiful figure in all nature. In its form we find no broken or harsh lines; in its motions, nothing constrained or abrupt. The eye wanders over the whole with unalloyed pleasure, and with every change of position every part assumes a new grace. It will swim faster than a man can walk.'

"The common swan is about five feet long, and its plumage is of a pure white color. The little swans, or cygnets, have bluish-gray plumage. The neck of this bird is very long and graceful, and capable of being bent or turned in many different directions. Under the feathers is a thick, soft down that is much valued as an article of commerce, both for use and ornament.

“The cry of the wild, or whistling, swan is thought by the Icelanders to be as pleasant as the sound of a violin; for, as their year is divided into one long day of summer and one longer, dreary night of winter, the swan’s cry, heard in the spring, tells them that the sun is coming back to them, and is associated in their minds with all that is cheerful and delightful. The wild swan is smaller than the tame one, and is found in most northern regions.

“This bird makes its nest of reeds and rushes on the margin of the water or on an islet in the stream. Both male and female assist in building it, and seven or eight white eggs, much larger than those of a goose, are laid in it. It is six weeks before the young are hatched, and the old birds are very dangerous to approach when their little family are feeding around them. Their fears take alarm at once, and in times of danger the mother swims off with the cygnets on her back. A fox swimming on an exploring visit to a swan’s nest was attacked and drowned by the watchful parent.

“The swan is delicate in its appetite, as becomes so beautiful a bird, and feeds chiefly on corn and bread, plants growing in the water, and roots and seeds which it finds on the margin. It is a favorite amusement with children to throw pieces of bread to the swans where they are kept in public gardens or private grounds, and to watch them arching their long necks as they pick up the food from the water.

“But the beauty of this bird is only outside beauty, after all. It is represented as spiteful and quarrelsome in disposition, ready to attack every animal as well as men. It will take sudden dislikes without any reason. Some swans kept in the Luxembourg Gardens, in Paris, took an aversion to all the keepers, and whenever they saw one they all came out of the water to pick a quarrel with him.

“‘Swans,’ we are told, ‘were formerly held in such great esteem in England that by an act of Edward IV. none except the son of the king was permitted to keep a swan unless possessed of a freehold to the value of five marks a year. By a

subsequent act the punishment for taking swans' eggs was imprisonment for a year and a day, and a fine at the king's will. At present they are not valued for the delicacy of their flesh, but numbers are still preserved for their beauty. Many may be seen on the Thames, where they are esteemed royal property,' as also in the parks of Europe and America.

'We have read how much goose-quills were at one time used, but swan-quills, being larger and more rare, are still more valuable, and would bring high prices. One of the principal sources of this trade is on the north-eastern coast of the Black Sea, where wild swans abound. They assemble in large flocks about the creeks that run into the shore, and the people who collect their feathers start in pursuit of them when the old birds are busy hatching and rearing their young. The feathers are drifted on shore by the tide and collected, and then sold to dealers who come from the neighboring towns.

"Swans live to a very great age, mention being made of one that was two

hundred years old. In old times they were believed to sing just before they died, though mute at other times. The swan's death-song has been proved to be only a poetical fancy; but these pretty lines on the subject convey a lesson that we should all lay to heart:

““What is that, mother?”

“The swan, my love:

He is floating down from his native grove.
No loved one now, no nestling nigh,
He is floating down by himself to die.
Death darkens his eye and unplumes his wings,
Yet the sweetest song is the last he sings.
Live so, my child, that when death shall come,
Swan-like and sweet, it may waft thee home.””

CHAPTER XXVIII.

"QUACK! QUACK!"—DUCKS.

"**A**FTER geese," said Miss Harson, "ducks seem to come, as a matter of course; and, although almost every one feels acquainted with such common fowls, we shall find that, like the geese, there are many things to learn about them that will surprise us.

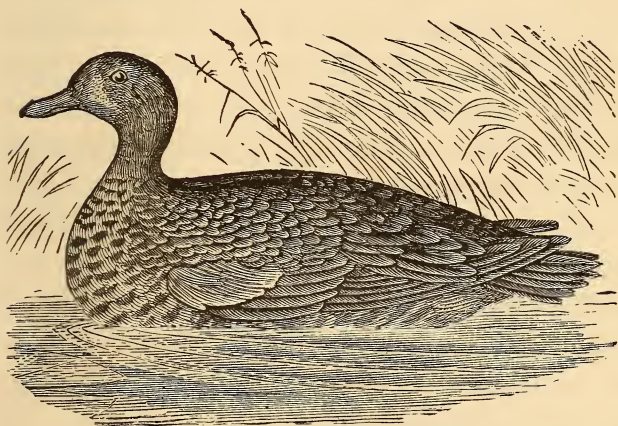
"Different kinds of wild ducks are found in various parts of the world. While we are accustomed to seeing the tame ducks only on the water or waddling along on the ground in a very awkward fashion, and would be very much surprised to see them spread their wings and fly up into a tree, this is just what some wild ducks do; and they not only roost in trees, but make their nests among the branches.

"In our own country the summer duck

builds, at quite a distance from the ground, in the hollows of trees, from which the young ones, soon after they are hatched, descend, and then make the best of their way to the water. The wood-ducks, too, are continually to be seen, during the season of rearing their young, flying between the river and the woods where they build. In England a duck's nest was found in an oak tree, twenty-five feet from the ground; the mother-bird was sitting on nine eggs that were placed on some small twigs laid crossways. Another duck was seen to fly out of a large oak in which a hawk had the year before made a nest. She was found to have repaired this old nest, and to have laid two eggs in it. Some other wild ducks took possession of a rook's nest at the top of an oak tree, and the drake would perch on a bough near the duck and take turns with her in sitting on the eggs.

“The canvas-back ducks are famous game, and are considered a great delicacy for the table; and the flesh of most wild ducks is thought to be very good

eating. Many gentlemen enjoy the pleasure of shooting them, and various methods of catching these birds have been practiced among different nations. They are so very shy that it is not easy to approach them. The Indians who live on



BLUE-WINGED TEAL (*Querquedula discors*).

the north coast of South America, in villages built on the shallows in the midst of the waters of Lake Maracaibo, have a very ingenious way of capturing them. They keep a number of calabashes floating up and down the lake, and the ducks get so accustomed to them that they will

let them drift down among them without seeming to be in the least afraid. When the duck-catcher sees that the gourds are floating near a large flock, he goes into the lake with a calabash over his head, having first made holes in it for seeing and breathing. Nothing is seen above the water but the calabash, which looks just like the others, as the Indian keeps the whole of his body under water. He steals along very cautiously toward the ducks, who have not the least suspicion that an enemy is so near, and suddenly seizes one of them by the leg and twitches the bird under water before it has a chance to alarm the rest by a cry or a flutter. Then he moves carefully toward another, which he treats in the same way. Having hung to a belt around his waist as many as he can well carry, he goes slowly back to the shore, leaving the empty calabashes bobbing up and down as before."

"I wonder what the ducks think," said Malcolm, "when so many of their friends disappear and never come back?"

"Perhaps they think they're drowned," suggested Clara.

"The idea of a duck drowning!" cried Malcolm; and Miss Harson, too, joined in the laugh. But she said very kindly,

"Never mind, dear; it was the first thing you happened to think of, and, in truth, they were drowned by being kept under the water by the Indian. But water-fowl, as they are called, never get drowned through being unable to float, because they are as much at home in the water as we are on dry land.

"The Chinese take great pains in rearing ducks, which they also train in quite a remarkable way. The young birds are kept in a large floating pen which has a broad bamboo bottom and a gallery around it above the river, also a bridge leading down to the water. 'An old and experienced stepmother is provided to lead them down and attend them when feeding; these old birds are so well trained that at the given signal in the evening they return in the utmost haste with their young broods. This signal is a whistle,

on the sound of which the whole flock sets itself in motion, waddling in regular order toward their boat. The first duck that enters is rewarded with some favorite food, the last is whipped as an idler; so that it is a comical sight to see the last birds, as if knowing what will happen to the last of all, making efforts to fly over the backs of others and get on board the boat in time to escape punishment.' The people who raise these ducks for sale live in boats and have no other houses; so, when the birds return to the boat, it means that they go home.

"But we must not forget the eider-duck," continued Miss Harson, "that supplies us with down. It is obliged, as has been well said, to have warmer underclothing than most other ducks, born and bred as it is among the dreary regions of the frozen seas, and living, either solitarily or in single pairs, near the ice, as far as possible from land. At the season, however, of building their nests and attending to their young ones, these ducks gather in great numbers on the northern islands.

“In Iceland the eider-ducks will build their nests quite close to the shore, and often near the dwellings of the natives, who treat them so kindly that they are almost like tame ducks and will allow people to walk among their nests. The drakes do not like this, and will often rush, alarmed, into the water when any one approaches; but the ducks generally sit still or fly off a yard or two from the nest, returning in a rage if the intruder tries to touch their eggs.

“The nests are made of sea-weed and lined with the finest down, which is plucked from the breasts of the old birds. When the first eggs are laid, these and the down are taken from the nest by the islanders; then the ducks re-line their dwelling and try to raise another family. But when eggs and down again disappear, things begin to look suspicious; and if the nests are robbed a third time, the birds will begin to desert the place.

“The duck leads the little birds out of the nest almost as soon as they are hatched; going before them to the shore,

they trot after her. When she comes to the waterside, she takes them on her back and swims a few yards with them, when she dives, and the young ones are left floating on the surface and have to take care of themselves. They are afterward seldom seen on land.

“Another branch of the duck family are known as teal, and are distinguished by the upper mandible of the bill projecting slightly beyond the lower mandible, as in our portly American blue-winged teal* and the green-winged teal.

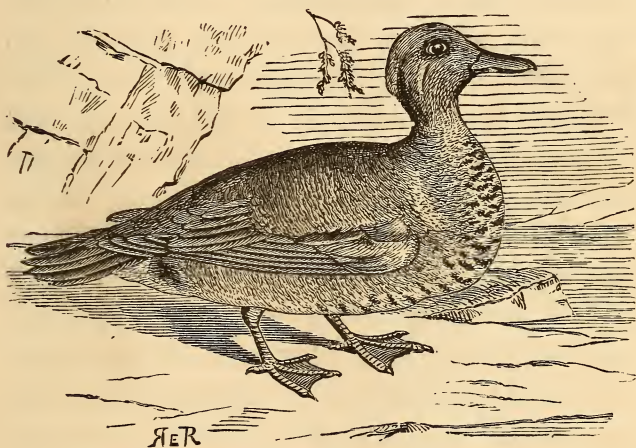
“Are there any stories about ducks?” asked Clara.

“Not very many that can be called stories,” was the reply—“only two or three little anecdotes to show that these birds as well as geese are capable of affection. At a house in England a very fierce and noisy house-dog was kept, within the length of whose chain it would have been dangerous for a stranger to venture; but a brood of ducklings that were reared in the same yard soon became so fond of

* See page 333.

him that whenever, from his barking, they suspected danger, they would rush toward him for protection and seek shelter in his kennel.

"A farmer's wife had a young duck which had been in some way deprived of its com-



THE GREEN-WINGED TEAL (*Nettion carolinensis*).

panions, and from that time it seemed to bestow all its affections on her. Wherever she moved it followed so closely that she was in constant fear of treading upon and crushing it to death. As it grew older its affection seemed to strengthen; it laid itself by the fire and basked on the hearth,

and when noticed seemed delighted. But when some other ducks were brought to the place, it was constantly driven out of the house, and by degrees it came to associate with its natural companions.

"Another duck was separated for a time from his mate and seemed to be pining for her loss, till one day she was brought up and turned loose among the flock. 'For a short time, being at a distance, he did not see her ; but when, on accidentally turning his head, he caught a glimpse of his well-known companion, he rushed toward her with an earnestness and affection which quite touched those who witnessed the meeting. Nothing from that moment would induce him to quit her ; and he manifested his joy at the unexpected reunion by twining his neck on hers, nestling it under her wing and gazing at her with eyes expressive of extreme delight and satisfaction.'

"And now," added Miss Harson, "I think we shall look on our common geese and ducks with fresh interest, since we know them to be capable of cherishing almost human feelings."

CHAPTER XXIX.

STORM-SIGNALS: THE ALBATROSS AND THE PETREL.

“**H**AVING come now to water-birds,” said Miss Harson, “we shall find that there are vast quantities of them—more, indeed, than we shall be able to attend to; and we can at present attempt only those that are best known.

“The wandering albatross is the largest sea-bird that flies. The plumage is usually of a dark-brown color above and white beneath. It is a strong, graceful bird, of rapid flight, and all its movements are marked by perfect ease.

““With what elegance it sails along, cleaving the air obliquely, inclining from one side to the other, descending and skimming close to the rolling waves, its huge pinions appearing almost to touch the water! It then soars aloft with equal bold-

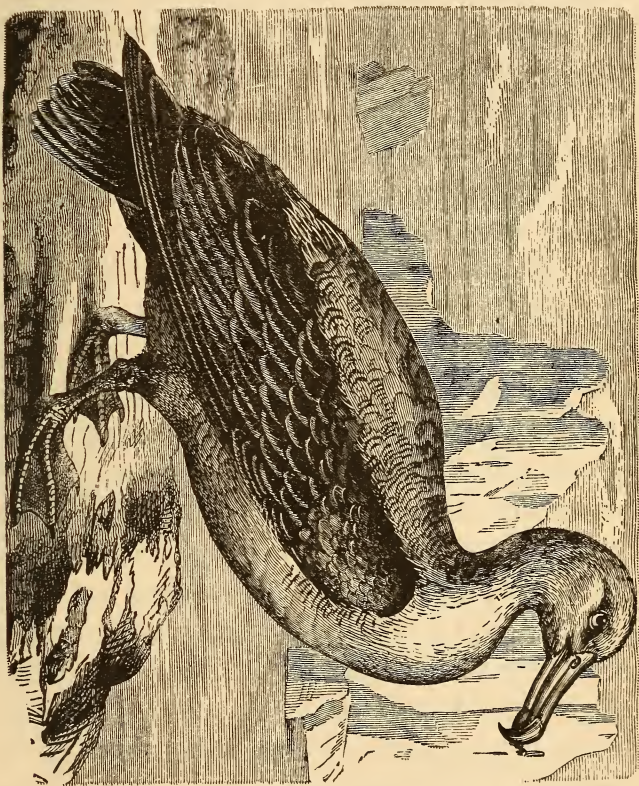
ness and facility of action, as if using the aid of the wings as a sail. So rapid are its movements that, having been seen near the ship, when only a few seconds have elapsed it has passed far away, still ascending, and, descending toward the surface of the water, seeking for food and ranging over an immense space in a very short period of time. Sometimes several may be seen floating upon the water engaged in cleaning their feathers, and thus imparting an additional gloss to their plumage.'

"This bird seems to live in the air, roaming constantly over the seas, and it has been found fully a thousand miles from land. It cannot bear confinement, and will mope and die unless allowed a free range of flight over its favorite element. 'No tempest troubles the albatross, for he may be seen with equal vigor sportively wheeling in the blast and carousing in the hurricane.

" "His march is o'er the mountain wave,
His home is on the deep."

" 'In the gale he will sweep occasionally the rising billows, and seem to delight in

THE COMMON ALBATROSS (*Diomedea exulans*).



the spray bursting over him. Tired, in truth, these birds rarely are ; but should they be, though never seen to swim, they can, in consequence of their feet being webbed and remarkably large, walk on the surface of the water, when it is smooth, with hardly any assistance from their wings ; and the noise of their tread may be heard at a great distance.'

"The albatross belongs especially to the southern seas, and it makes its nest on icy rocks or dreary islands. The young ones have been found on the ground completely uncovered, with the old ones stalking round them. Each bird lays but one egg ; and after the young albatross is hatched, it is a whole year before it can fly. The courtship of these birds is described as very amusing: 'The couple approach one another with great apparent ceremony, bringing their beaks repeatedly together, swinging their heads, and contemplating each other with very deliberate attention. Sometimes this will continue for two hours together, like a courtship in a pantomime.'

"The albatross is an enormous eater, and

is easily caught by baiting a hook with offal and letting it trail after the vessel. It will sometimes rise into the air after swallowing the bait, when it is brought on board by hauling in the line as a boy does a kite. Albatrosses are often seen flocking to some particular part of the ocean after a shoal of cuttle-fish, which they seem to prefer to any other food. Having satisfied themselves for a time, they will turn their attention to any passing ship, from which they are always watched with much interest. 'They often poise themselves for a length of time over the same spot, and are then seen crossing the vessel; at other times they hover not far above our heads, casting sly glances with their bright eyes at the unfeathered bipeds below, and then resume their flight, sailing to and fro apparently without any muscular exertion, steering their course by aid of the tail and the wings. They appear as comfortable floating in the breeze as we should be on a bed of luxurious softness.'

"In the Falkland Islands the albatross lives on terms of great friendship with the

penguin ; their nests are found near each other and constructed with great uniformity, that of the albatross being always in the centre of a little square formed by the nests of four penguins.

“Sailors consider it unlucky to kill an albatross, or, indeed, any bird that hovers around a vessel. Coleridge’s famous poem, the ‘Ancient Mariner,’ is founded on this superstition. It is the story of a ship driven to ‘the land of ice and of fearful sounds, where no living thing was to be seen ;’ but

“‘At length did cross an albatross :
Through the fog it came ;
As if it had been a Christian soul,
We hailed it in God’s name.

“‘And a good south-wind sprang up behind :
The albatross did follow,
And every day, for food or play,
Came to the mariners’ hollo.’

But the sailor wickedly shoots the albatross, and then follows a dreadful narrative of the troubles and sufferings of the ship’s crew. The Ancient Mariner finally reaches land in his own country and prays

for the forgiveness of his sins; and the poem ends with this beautiful verse:

“ ‘ He prayeth best who loveth best
All things both great and small;
For the dear God who loveth us,
He made and loveth all.’ ”

The children listened with great attention to this account of the albatross; and when Miss Harson told them that the stormy petrel would come next, as belonging to the same family, they seemed to expect still greater entertainment.

“ Here he is,” continued their governess — “ a little bird about the size of a house-swallow—skimming along the hollows of the waves and through the spray upon their tops at the astonishing rate of sixty miles an hour. Between the toes the petrel has a membrane which particularly fits it for swimming; and, in spite of its small size, it ventures farther from land than do the larger sea-birds, being often met with in the very middle of the Atlantic Ocean. Its plumage is of a dull black and rusty brown, with a patch of white where the tail begins.

“Petrels are to be found all over the world, sometimes in flocks of over a hundred million. They are often called ‘Mother Carey’s chickens,’ and are not favorites with sailors, because they think they bring stormy weather when they fly around or follow a ship :

“ ‘ Where mountain-billows roll and loud winds sing,
The stormy petrel, on untiring wing,
Still skims along the ocean’s troubled breast,
And safely steers above each foaming crest :
As the prophetic herald glances by,
The anxious sailor knows that danger’s nigh.’

“ ‘ The common name “petrel,” or “little peter,” given to the whole of this family, has reference to the apostle Peter’s walking upon the water.’ They are also called ‘storm-finch,’ ‘water-witch’ and ‘sea-swallow,’ besides their scientific name, which means ‘sea-runner,’ and which is given to them because, in searching for food, they fly close to the surface, and while stooping let down their feet and pat the water with them, which action makes them seem to run on the waves. They float very lightly, but are not able to dive ; and

their flight is as buoyant and rapid as is that of the swallow.

“One peculiarity of the petrels is that their bodies seem to be full of oil, and in some of the islands of the Hebrides the inhabitants use them as candles by passing through the body a rush, which is found to burn as well as if dipped in tallow or any other grease. They also yield a quantity of down, which supplies the islanders with warm bedding. They are justly looked upon by them as very valuable birds.

“Like other sea-birds, the petrels build their nests in the crevices of rocks, in holes in the turf or under stones on the beaches. These nests contain only one large white egg.

“A species of petrel in Australia is said to burrow in sand, like rabbits, lying hid in the holes by day and in the evening going forth in quest of food. But all these birds are more lively at night; and the common stormy petrel has been seen to come forth, like the bat, at dusk, and to make a clamorous noise while seeking for food.

“Even this wild, strange bird, though seeming to delight in storms and darkness, can be tamed, and soon loses all fear of persons who approach it. One that was kept in a cage for some time was fed in a very curious way: this was by smearing the feathers of the breast with train-oil, which the bird afterward sucked with its bill. Sometimes the oil was put in a saucer in the cage, and then the bird would dip in its feathers and suck the oil as before.”

The children thought this “very funny,” and there was the usual request for a story. Miss Harson told them that she had no story, but that in place of one she would read for them these pretty lines on the stormy petrel:

“A thousand miles from land are we,
Tossing about on the stormy sea,
From billow to bounding billow cast
Like fleecy snow on the stormy blast.
The sails are scattered about like weeds;
The strong masts shake like quivering reeds;
The mighty cables and iron chains,
The hull, which all earthly strength disdains—
They strain and they crack, and, hearts like stone,
Their natural hard, proud strength disown.

“ ‘Up and down ! up and down !

From the base of the wave to the billow's crown,
And amidst the flashing and feathery foam,
The stormy petrel finds a home—
A home, if such a place there be
For her who lives on the wide, wide sea,
On the craggy ice, in the frozen air,
And only seeking her rocky lair
To warm her young, and teach them to spring
At once o'er the waves on their stormy wing.

“ ‘O'er the deep ! o'er the deep !

Where the whale and the shark and the swordfish sleep,
Outflying the blast and the driving rain,
The petrel telleth her tale in vain ;
For the mariner curseth the warning bird
Who bringeth him news of the storm unheard.
Ah ! thus does the prophet of good or ill
Meet hate from the creatures he serveth still,
Yet he never falters.—So, Petrel, spring
Once more o'er the waves on thy stormy wing.’ ”

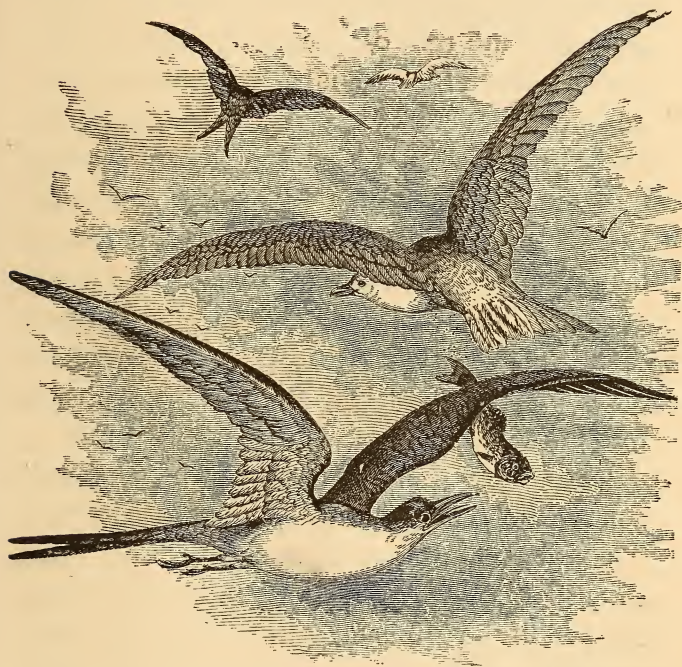
CHAPTER XXX.

WINGS OF SNOW: THE GULLS.

“THESE plump-looking birds with forked tails,” said Miss Harson, “belong to a very numerous tribe that are found in all parts of the world wherever there are rugged sea-coasts with rocky precipices. They are often called ‘sea-vultures,’ for nothing in the way of food comes amiss to them, the most loathsome carrion being as acceptable to the gulls as is the finest and freshest fish. They will eat until they can scarcely breathe, and may then be taken up in a perfectly helpless state.

“‘Nature has amply provided them with means for their wandering lives. While the cormorant is pent up in his cavern, and most of the other sea-birds are driven to the rocks and crags, during heavy gales,

it matters as little to the gull as to the gannet that the weather be fair or foul. Cold has no effect upon him, provided as he is

GULLS (*Laride*).

with a thick coat of the softest down ; light, too, as he is, he tops and rides over the waves without an effort ; and his wide wings ensure him a safe conveyance from

every peril, save that of the gun, to which he may be exposed.'

"The common gull is about seventeen inches long, with back and wings of a pale gray and the rest of the body white. The black-and-white gull is a larger, and altogether a handsomer, bird. The sailor, we are told, is sure to find these birds wherever he goes, whether under the burning sun of the tropical regions or among the frozen icebergs of the Arctic circle, and always bearing the same restless, noisy character. The laughing gulls are especially garrulous and noisy, being rarely silent for more than one hour out of the twenty-four."

"Do they really laugh, Miss Harson?" asked the little girls, with great interest.

"Not as people do," was the reply, "but they make a noise which sounds like laughter. All the gulls are noisy enough, particularly when they are busy with their nests and eggs. The Arctic gulls are said to fear neither the bird nor the animal that comes too near their nest, and never hesitate to attack the intruder, no matter what his size. 'Where they breed in considerable

numbers, neither hawks, nor even eagles, are allowed to approach; for if, either by accident or by design, any of these birds of prey are seen, the whole assembly attack and compel them to retire. Hence, in some places where they abound, they become the guardians of the young lambs, which the people consider perfectly safe during summer; and in return for this protection the gull is never molested, being held in no less esteem than the stork in Holland or the ibis in Egypt.' "

"How funny it seems," said Malcolm, "for birds to take care of lambs!"

"It does seem rather out of the usual course of things," replied his governess, "but the parties most interested in it appear to be mutually satisfied. Besides men, the poor gulls have many enemies who are fond of eggs, and among these crows are particularly troublesome. There is an account of a pair of crows that would come at the same time with the gulls, and build their nest just opposite for the express purpose of feeding on their eggs; 'for no sooner do the gulls begin to lay

than these two crows are perpetually on the lookout, frequently hovering over and watching for an opportunity to carry off a prize. The moment the thieves appear the whole gull-colony is in a state of commotion and consternation, those on the nests cowering over their new-laid treasures, while the others, by their screams and menacing attitudes, do their best to frighten away the marauders. But the cunning crows usually gain their point. Watching an opportunity, down they pounce, pierce an egg with their sharp beak and fly off with it in a trice.'

"These eggs are considered very good eating, and immense numbers of them are collected every year. To accomplish this, the most dangerous rocks and precipices have to be climbed, and sometimes the egg-seekers are suspended by long ropes over the cliffs where the numerous nests afford a rich harvest. But we shall come to this afterward.

"Gulls, like other sea-birds, are great fishers, and herrings seem to form a considerable portion of their repasts. They appear

thoroughly to understand the habits of these fish, and to shape their own course accordingly. In the Shetland Islands, at a particular time of tide, the herrings descend from the surface; and during their intervals of absence the gulls, as if knowing that fishing was out of the question for the time, generally go inland and rest among the heaths. As soon as the tide changes and the herrings rise, out come the gulls again in full force, and by their loud and discordant screams seem to congratulate one another on the approaching feast. When they take to their wings, it is a sure sign that a fishing-season is at hand. 'It is astonishing to see with what precision and regularity the flocks far removed from the sea rouse themselves from a state of quiet and repose and, suddenly full of bustle and activity, betake themselves to the herring-grounds.' Here, as everywhere in natural history, we wonder at the guidance given by Him who 'satisfieth the wants of every living thing.'

"These birds are very sure to follow in the wake of the whale-fishers, and especial-

ly when they are busied in cutting up a whale. If some other hungry bird has secured a choice morsel of blubber or flesh, down comes the gull and wrests the prize from its grasp."

"Why, he's a thief!" said Malcolm, indignantly.

"Yes, he is almost as bad as our sportsmen—quite as bad as our butchers and poultry-dealers.

"Some one speaks of watching the gulls in their favorite haunts and 'listening to their wild cry mingling with the hoarse roar of the waves lashing the rocks below. A couple of common gulls had established themselves on a bit of a plateau that made one giddy to look at and quite tremble for the fate of their sole offspring—a little gray, down-covered nestling with about half an inch between its toes and destruction; for a breath might have blown it over. But there stood the little tottering bird, quite at its ease, so well tutored, apparently, that when the old ones successively returned with food, it betrayed none of those emotions, common to young birds,

which would certainly have thrown it off its balance—no tremulous movement of its flappers, no impatient stretchings of its neck, no gapings of its mouth. There it stood motionless, as if conscious of the dangers attendant on even the slightest bustling display of satisfaction.

“‘It was impossible not to feel something like pity for the dull life it was doomed to lead in such a cradle, it being evident that from the moment of its quitting its egg-shell to that hour the choice of standing on its right or left leg, or a cautious putting forth of one foot before the other to the extent of a few inches, was the only source of amusement within its reach.’”

“Poor little gull!” said Edith, sympathizingly, as though she fancied herself covered with gray down and standing on one foot on a narrow ledge by the sea.

“The gulls are used to it, dear,” replied her governess, with a smile, “and probably, in their way, they manage to enjoy themselves. If *noise* is any sign of fun, they certainly have plenty of it; for the same gentleman says: “The din was incessant,

and some seemed quite exhausted with screaming or hearing others scream; for they might be seen flying off from the main body to a retired crag or niche, as if to rest a while in perfect silence.' "

"I like to hear about the gulls," said Clara. "Isn't there any more to read us, Miss Harson, where the picture is of their flying around so?"

"I thought that you might be tired of the subject," was the reply; "but if you are not, I will read you a little more of their habits.

"Speaking of the noise made by the gulls, the writer continues: 'Now and then—indeed, as if by mutual consent—the uproar entirely ceased, and the whole body settled themselves on a rocky inclined plane, interspersed with grass, just below the lightkeeper's dwelling, which formed their grand nursery establishment; for there, in every stage of growth, hundreds of young ones were moving about. No doubt each parent had a perfect knowledge of its own offspring, though, generally speaking, there were no signs of recognition; for, to all appearance, old and young seemed to min-

gle without much reference to relationship, and a stranger might have supposed there was a common property in the nestlings. The only sign of parental attachment was that an old bird would now and then fix its eye in a more pointed manner upon some one of these living gray puff-balls of downy feathers, and then, suddenly opening its mouth, deposit at the feet of the fledgling a crawful of half-digested shrimps and softened crabs.'

"And now," said Miss Harson, "I will read you a few lines of poetry written on the 'Sea-Gull,' and I think you will like them as well as I do :

" ' White bird of the tempest ! O beautiful thing !
With the bosom of snow and the motionless wing,
Now sweeping the billow, now floating on high,
Now bathing thy plumes in the light of the sky ;
Now poising o'er ocean thy delicate form,
Now breasting the surge with thy bosom so warm ;
Now darting aloft with a heavenly scorn,
Now shooting along like a ray of the morn ;
Now lost in the folds of the cloud-curtained dome,
Now floating abroad like a flake of the foam ;
Now silently poised o'er the war of the main,
Like the spirit of Charity brooding o'er Pain ;
Now gliding with pinion all silently furled,
Like an angel descending to comfort the world . ' "

CHAPTER XXXI.

NO BEAUTIES: THE PENGUIN.

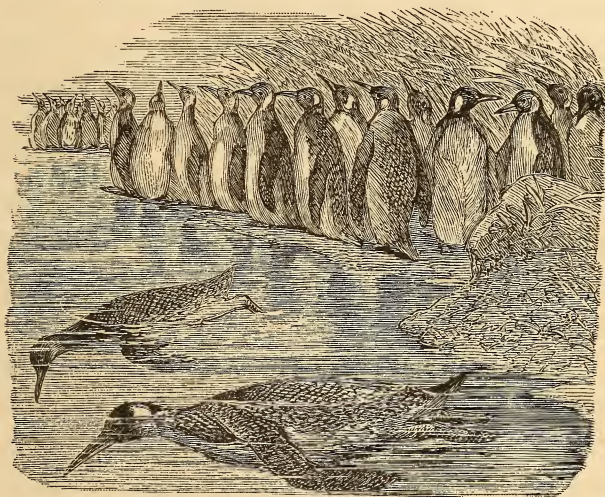
“ONLY look at these funny birds all in a row!” said Clara, laughing. “They are standing up on their hind feet.”

“Their hind feet are the only feet they have,” replied Miss Harson, “and these are so far back that when the birds are standing on them they look like dogs begging. The penguins form another large class of sea-birds, perhaps the most peculiar of any, as they are said to have the qualities of men, of birds and of fishes: ‘Like men, they are upright; like birds, they are feathered; and like fishes, they have fin-like appendages that beat the water before and serve for all the purposes of swimming rather than flying.’

“The penguin has scarcely any legs at all, and, were it not for the help of its

equally short wings in walking, it would hardly be able to move faster than a tortoise. It is so much better fitted for water than for land that it spends most of its time there and flies after fish with great rapidity.

“The king-penguins, as they are called,



PENGUINS (*Aptenodytes*).

are found in the Southern Ocean, and are larger than a goose; they are very numerous on the lonely islands scattered over the dreary wilderness of those seas. ‘As their legs project from their bodies in the same direction with their tails, they walk upright;

and when a flock of them are seen moving in file or arranged along the ledges of the rocks, they appear like a company of soldiers, for they hold their heads very high, with stretched necks, while their little flappers project like two arms. As the feathers on their breasts are beautifully white, with a line of black running across the crop, they have been by others compared to a row of children with white aprons tied round their waists with black strings.' "

The two little girls were very much taken with this idea, while Malcolm pronounced the penguins "funny-looking things, any way."

"It is very amusing to read of their nest-building," continued Miss Harson, "which is certainly a wonderful performance. It seems that before they go to work they assemble on the shore and seem to spend a day or two in deliberation ; at the end of this time they begin the grand work for which they appear to have met together. They fix upon as level a piece of ground as they can find, often four or five acres in extent, and as near the water as possible,

keeping clear of stones and other hard substances which might injure their eggs. They next lay out an oblong space large enough to accommodate the whole multitude, and this they clear entirely of stones, which they carry outside the lines until they raise quite a little wall on three sides, the other side being open to the water, which it faces. 'Within the range of stones and rubbish they form a pathway six or seven feet in width, quite smooth. On this path they all walk by day, and on it the sentinels patrol by night. Having thus finished what may be called their outworks, they next lay out the whole area in little squares of equal size, formed by narrow paths, which cross each other at right angles, and which are also made very smooth. At each intersection of these paths an albatross constructs her nest, while in the centre of each little square is a penguin's nest.'"

"Isn't that funny nest-making!" exclaimed Malcolm.

"It is indeed," was the reply; "it more resembles burrowing as the rabbits do than making nests like birds. But we have not

quite finished with them yet. Nearly the whole marked-out space is taken up by penguins, albatrosses and a few other sea-birds, which find room in unoccupied spots. The nests of the albatrosses are very different from those of the penguins; and the latter birds will rob their neighbors whenever they can. The penguin makes a hollow in the earth just deep enough to prevent her one egg—possibly two—from rolling out; while the albatross piles up a little mound of earth, grass and shells about the size of a small water-bucket, and sits on the top of it.

“The poor people who live on the wild and lonely islands where these birds are found depend very much on them as a means of support, as their clothing, their food and their lamplight all come from this source.”

“Isn’t it wicked for them to take the poor birds’ eggs, Miss Harson?” asked little Edith.

“Not when they are obliged to do it for a living, dear,” replied her governess.

CHAPTER XXXII.

ALMOST HUMAN: THE PARROT.



HERE! What do they look like?" asked Miss Harson as she smilingly watched the children's admiration and astonishment.

Such an array of parrots could not be found out of a tropical forest—parrots of all shapes, sizes and col-

ors, some perched upon branches, some with wings spread, some hanging by their beaks and swinging to and fro; but all apparently having a very good time of it, and doubtless chattering and screaming with all their might and main. It was a gorgeously-colored picture: the bright-

est reds and blues and greens seemed mingled with all the colors of the rainbow; and when the children finally decided that the parrots looked more like great gaudy flowers than like anything else of which they could think, their governess thought it a very good comparison.

"These gayest of the gay birds," said Miss Harson, "are the macaws. Scarlet and blue are their predominant colors, mixed with some yellow and green. They are found in the recesses of South American forests, and also in some parts of the East and West Indies. The real parrots are found in all tropical regions, the beautiful scarlet lories in India, and the funny cockatoos in Australia.

"There are a great many varieties of parrots; and in the majority of this family we find a plumage which for richness and variety of coloring yields to few of the feathered race. Though by some it may be thought gaudy and too violently and abruptly contrasted, still we think no one can look at some of the gorgeously-decked

macaws and the splendid and effulgent lories, or the diversely-tinted Australian parrakeets, without acknowledging them to be among the most beautiful and striking of the feathered race."

"The figures of parrots cannot be called elegant, the head and bill being too large for the rest of the body. In parrakeets this defect is balanced by a very long tail, and their gracefulness of movement is quite unsurpassed. The feet of this whole class of birds are very curious, two toes being placed forward and two backward. They are evidently formed for firm clinging and climbing. It is in those regions where the trees are clothed with perpetual verdure, and where a constant store of fruits and seeds can be found, that parrots abound in the greatest number.

"In captivity these birds never show the ease and grace which marks them in their native forests. There they are seen climbing about the branches in every direction and suspending themselves in every possible attitude, all their movements being assisted by the hooked and

powerful bill, which is as useful as a hand or a third foot would be. Their large pointed wings show that they also have great powers of flight. .

“Parrots spend very little time in nest-building, but bring up their families in the hollows of decayed trees, the eggs, which vary in number from two to five or six, being laid on the bare, rotten wood. They are fond of roosting during the night in these cavities; and some one says: ‘At dusk a flock of parrakeets may be seen alighting against the trunk of a sycamore or any other tree where a considerable excavation exists within it. Immediately below the entrance the birds all cling to the bark, and crawl into the hole to pass the night. When such a hole does not prove sufficient to hold the whole flock, those around the entrance hook themselves on by their claws and the tip of the upper mandible.’”

“That’s one way of going to bed!” laughed Malcolm. “I should think they would drop off.”

“It can scarcely be called going to bed,”

was the reply; "but this singular style of sleeping is also peculiar to bats, and



PARROT AND YOUNG.

possibly to some other creatures whose habits we shall study."

“Do parrots talk to one another when they live in the woods?” asked Clara.

“Not as we talk, dear; the natural notes of parrots are merely shrill, piercing screams. To imitate the human voice, the bird must first hear us speak. Nor can all parrots do this, the power of articulating words being chiefly confined to the ordinary species, in which the tongue is large, broad and fleshy at the tip. They do not seem to mind captivity, even if taken when grown, and they are particularly fond of human society. The macaw especially is very docile and talkative, and it is more apt to be good-tempered than are the generality of parrots.

“Parrots will also imitate other birds and strange sounds with great exactness. It is related that ‘a parrot caught the note of a chaffinch so accurately that it was impossible to tell the one from the other. In summer-time Polly used to be indulged by being placed in a tree, where she took much delight in climbing about the branches. At these times she would frequently repeat the chaffinch’s note, when the birds would

come from all quarters and settle upon the tree. It was then highly amusing to hear the parrot and the chaffinches call one another. After a time, however, Polly, in the exuberance of her delight at the sight of so many winged creatures around her, would suddenly call out, 'Pretty Poll!' when the chaffinches, startled at so human a sound, instantly took flight and made their escape as speedily as possible; and Polly looked woefully astonished to find her visitors had so suddenly deserted her.'

"The voice of this bird is more like a man's than that of any other. The raven's is too hoarse, and the jay's and the magpie's are too shrill; but the parrot's note is of the true pitch and capable of a variety of modulations. For this it is indebted to the form of its bill, tongue and head. In addition to the talent of speech, the parrot is endowed with a strong memory, and with more sagacity than falls to the lot of most birds. Parrots really do so many wonderful things in the way of speech that it is not surprising there should be very extraordinary stories afloat concerning

them. They have even been accused of repeating poetry, and one was said to repeat a whole sonnet from Petrarch."

"Do you believe that, Miss Harson?" asked Malcolm, incredulously.

"I do not think it probable," was the reply, "and scarcely possible; yet the memory of some of these birds is certainly very wonderful. They are particularly fond, too, of mischievous jokes and of disappointing people when anything is expected of them. Some one says of a gray parrot 'that he whistles and sings capitally; only, if he sees that he is watched, he abruptly ceases, and tries to look as if he had been quite silent. His chief amusement is to sit in the window, behind some green shrubs, and to startle passengers, especially ladies, by uttering a tremendous scream close to their ears. He imitates a canary whose cage hangs near his window, and has managed to catch the song of the little bird very well; only he has a habit of spoiling the effect of the music by breaking off and laughing in the middle of his song.'

“Another parrot had been placed at an open window while some painters were engaged upon a row of posts that crossed the pathway. They were constantly calling out ‘Wet paint!’ to the passers-by, and the parrot learned the phrase at once. From that time one of his chief amusements was to call out ‘Wet paint!’ and then wait to see the people start and cautiously thread their way between the posts.

“One parrot appeared to derive most of his pleasure in life from teasing the family cat, and whenever he was let out of his cage he invariably went to look for her. When found, he began his attentions by biting her ears or her tail—a proceeding that appeared to give him great enjoyment; but it was not at all relished by the cat. Yet when he could catch Tabby napping, his happiness was complete; for then he had a fine chance of frightening her. Very quietly indeed would he steal up to the spot where she was lying, dreaming, perhaps, of a land peopled altogether with rats and mice, and suddenly scream in her ear,

‘Who are you?’ Poor Puss! how she would jump! while her tormentor fairly shrieked with delight.”

“He ought to have had a good whipping,” said Malcolm, promptly.

“The cat was probably of the same opinion,” replied his teacher, “but it would be a rather difficult matter to whip a bird. This same parrot, it seems, always objected to a noise that was not made by himself. One day some small boys came on a visit to the house where he was kept, and began to romp and play in boy fashion in the same room with the parrot. Polly screamed out indignantly, ‘Sarah! here’s a row!’ When wild in their native woods, the parrots amuse themselves at the expense of their neighbors, but they are not cunning enough always to escape from the more mischievous monkeys. The one in our picture has had a narrow escape evidently, as he makes off with the loss of his tail-feathers, which, happily for him, were not *too* firmly attached to his body.

“A very remarkable parrot-story is of one that belonged to King Henry VII.,



PARROT AND MONKEYS.

who was then residing at Westminster, in his palace by the river Thames. This bird had learned a variety of words and sentences from constantly hearing so many different people who stopped there to go up or down the river. But one day, while jumping around on its perch, the parrot fell into the water, crying out at the same time, as loud as it could scream, 'A boat! Twenty pounds for a boat!' A waterman who heard the cry ran to the place where the parrot was floating, and, grasping the draggled bird, returned him in safety to his royal owner. The parrot was a great favorite, and the man who had saved him demanded twenty pounds for his services, because, as he said, that was the sum promised by the bird himself and the king was in honor bound to pay it. But Henry VII. was especially fond of money, and twenty pounds appeared to him a very large sum to part with just for fishing a parrot out of the water. Finally, both agreed to leave it to the bird himself. When he was appealed to, the ungrateful parrot replied, with a chuckle, 'Give the

knave a groat!" A groat," added Miss Harson, "is a very small coin—less than a penny; and this is probably all that the man got for his trouble."

"What a mean king!" exclaimed Malcolm, contemptuously. "And if that parrot fell into the water again, I hope he stayed there."

"Here is an account," continued the governess, "of a parrot turned school-master. Some travelers going up the Amazon River heard an extraordinary noise like chattering and swearing; and, having landed their boat, they took their guns and crept quietly to the tree from whence the sound proceeded. A very singular sight presented itself. On the topmost branch was perched a large green parrot, while on the neighboring branches were seated a host of his companions, whom he was teaching to talk. His language was the Portuguese, and he would give out a short sentence in that tongue, it being imitated by the crowd below. Then he would dance and roll his head and laugh, and all the other parrots did

the same things. Unfortunately, however, one of the scholars saw the intruders ; and, giving notice to his companions, they all flew away, with their green professor at their head."

The children were very much delighted with the parrot-school, and thought how much surprised people would be to find a flock of talking parrots in a wood ; for there was no doubt that the professor would at least succeed in teaching them Portuguese.

"Here is a lady's account of a pet parrot," said Miss Harson, "which I think particularly interesting: 'When I was a child, I had a fine gray parrot called Ben. He was a funny, good-natured fellow, with a dash of vanity in his composition, which manifested itself in a love of dress. You could not please him more than by attiring him in a doll's hat and cloak ; and when so arrayed, he would strut about the room in the most dignified manner, evidently admiring his exceedingly comical appearance. He would also enter thoroughly into the fun of the game of 'make-be-

lieve;' for if told to go to sleep, he would instantly shut his eyes and appear perfectly unconscious even when called by name. But if we maintained an unusual degree of silence, he would slyly peep about to see if he were being observed; and if he found us watching him, he would again close his eyes and become oblivious. But if he saw that we were engaged, he would turn his attention to botanical researches among the flowers, or some other equally destructive occupation.'

"The same bird would also feign death when ordered, and would permit himself to be pulled about by the feathers as he lay on the floor without any signs of life. But he would not permit a stranger's hand to approach him, and, being aware of the presence of the strange fingers by some internal instinct, greeted them with a sharp snap."

Clara and Edith decided that there would be some comfort in a parrot like that—one who actually enjoyed being dressed up in doll's clothes. Malcolm thought there was more fun in the pro-

fessor or in the parrot that fell into the Thames ; but the little girls insisted that Ben was "the sweetest."

"The parrots in the picture," said Clara, "look ugly because of their great hooked bills. I should be afraid of them."

"An angry parrot would not be pleasant to deal with," replied Miss Harson, "on account of both beak and claws. This beak is very strong, and parrots delight in nothing so much as in nibbling and pecking at various objects. Nuts and peach-stones will amuse them for a long time, and it is related of a certain Polly that 'he was very fond of most fruits, but his great favorite was a walnut. His beak could not open wide enough to take an entire walnut at once, so as to crack it, and therefore a half nut at a time was given him. With that he was delighted; and he showed his gratification by a short inward chuckle which lasted until the nut was finished. One half walnut would last nearly three hours before he could pick out the entire contents.

“This he did in a very scientific manner. He held the nut tightly in one claw, and then, by means of the tip of his beak, picked out small morsels, and conveyed them to his mouth by his tongue. He seemed to use his beak in much the same manner as a miner uses a pickaxe—namely, by driving the point of it into the substance of the nut, and then prizing out a morsel on the lever principle. If I wished to be very kind indeed or to reward the bird for good conduct, I was accustomed to remove the shell and present him with the kernel. This caused him singular gratification, and he used to dance with delight and pour out quite a stream of chuckling as he held the nut on the point of his sharp beak.’

“Another parrot delighted in peach-stones, and cared for nothing else so long as he could get one of these dainties. His exertions to crack the stone formed a large part of his amusement, but he got very angry at every failure; for the peach-stone was too hard for him, although he managed to crack nuts without any trouble.

“But our parrot evening,” added Miss

Harson, "has been an unusually long one, and it must now come to an end. We have not quite finished the family, though, and must next time take what remains of them."

CHAPTER XXXIII.

A SCREECHER: THE COCKATOO.

“**W**HAT a funny-looking bird!” exclaimed Clara. “Isn’t it an owl, Miss Harson?”

“‘The Great White Cockatoo,’” read Malcolm. “Well, it *does* look like an owl, little sister, and no mistake. See its funny ears sticking up, and its ruff of feathers.”

“The ears are rather imaginary, Malcolm,” said his governess; “but the cockatoos certainly are odd-looking birds, and closely allied to parrots. This large white one is about the size of a domestic fowl, and its plumage is of pure white, with the exception of what are called the large pen-feathers and the outermost feathers of the tail: these are sulphur-colored on the inside for about halfway from the root. The tuft, or crest, on the head—which is the cocka-

too's particular badge—is five inches long and can be raised or lowered at pleasure.

“There are a smaller white cockatoo and a red-crested cockatoo. The whole plumage of the latter species is tinged with pale rose-color. Here is his portrait, and he is certainly one of the handsomest birds we have yet seen.”

The little girls so warmly admired this beautiful foreigner that Malcolm accused them of coveting his feathers for their dolls' hats. After this idea had been suggested, they gazed at them more wistfully than ever.

“The red-crested cockatoo is a very majestic bird,” continued Miss Harson; “he is even larger than the great white cockatoo, but not nearly so affectionate. He will imitate the cries of animals, and seems to take special delight in the cackling of hens and the crowing of cocks. He spends much of his time in screaming ‘Cockatoo!’ like most of the species; and, as his noises are accompanied by a constant flapping of the wings, he is anything but a quiet bird.

"These birds are all natives of the Molucca Islands, though many of the species are to be found in Australia. They are generally kept in a large bell-shaped cage made of wire, with two perches and a large



LEADBEATER'S COCKATOO (*Cacatua Leadbeateri*).

metal ring, in which they delight to swing. A large white cockatoo took great pleasure in having some one swing him round as fast as possible while he held on with his claws. As he went through the air he would cry out in delight, 'Oh what a lark! Oh what a lark!'"

"Can the cockatoos talk, just like parrots?" asked Clara.

"Not so well as parrots," was the reply. "It is said to be difficult to teach cockatoos to speak at all. They listen better than other parrots, and are more obedient, but in vain attempt to repeat what is said to them, and seem as if they tried to make up for this by affectionate caresses and other expressions of feeling. Their mild disposition and graceful motions add much to their beauty. In some parts of India, we are told, they become so domesticated as to build their nests on the roofs of the houses.

"Many years ago a pair of cockatoos were exhibited in Paris and did many wonderful things. When ordered to do so, they would spread out their crests, salute the company with a nod, with beak and tongue touch articles pointed out, answer questions 'Yes' or 'No' by certain signs, and in the same manner tell the hour, the number of persons in the room, the color of their clothes, etc. They would also kiss each other, and were said to be very affectionate.

“In Australia cockatoos are often hunted by the natives for the sake of their flesh; but, as they are very shy and easily frightened in their wild state, the hunter begins cautiously. He knows that these birds are fond of roosting near a stream of water; so he watches quietly on the bank until he sees a flock in the air. The birds fly to the large trees around the stream; and with a wonderful deal of screaming and fluttering and flying from tree to tree they finally settle themselves for their evening nap.

“The native creeps quietly along, taking great care to make no sound, and steals cautiously from tree to tree and from bush to bush, getting nearer and nearer to his prey. But, in spite of all his care, the sentinel-birds suddenly give the alarm, and away fly the flock to the tree that is nearest the water, huddling close together, as if knowing that danger is near. Then the native goes close to the water, and the frightened birds plainly see their enemy. They utter loud cries of terror and spring into the air as if trying to escape, but the

hunter has only to draw his boomerang from his belt and fling it with violence. First it goes downward, as if about to drop into the water, and then it spins upward in a very strange manner and darts through the air, making all kinds of turns and twists, in each of which it is sure to strike a cockatoo. The curious weapon actually seems to be alive; and the more the terrified birds try to escape it, the more they seem to get in its way, and with loud screams numbers of them fall to the ground. But the hunter is not easily satisfied; and, knowing that cockatoos are very affectionate, he picks up a wounded one and fastens it on a tree. When the other birds hear the piteous cries of their companion, they fly back to see what is the matter. Then up goes the dreadful boomerang again, and one, two or more fall dead or wounded.

“Cockatoos make their nests in the decayed boughs of trees and lay two pure-white eggs. But they are not very wise about these nests, for in making them the old birds gather twigs from the neighbor-

ing trees and strip off the bark, letting the shreds fall to the ground; so that under the tree where there is a nest a little heap of bark is generally to be found, and this tells the natives where to find young cockatoos, of which they are particularly fond."

"Poor cockatoos!" said Clara; "I should think they would like best to live in cages, where they are safe."

"They seem very happy in captivity," replied Miss Harson, "and sometimes enjoy a mischievous prank quite as much as do the parrots. A lady who was in the habit of visiting a family where a cockatoo was kept was often frightened by the bird's making a sudden spring from the other end of the cage, as if about to fly at her, whenever she approached his domain, and the visitor's shrieks, mingled with the screams of the cockatoo, produced a dreadful din. The bird really seemed to enjoy finding some one who could scream louder than he did.

"Cockatoos are much afraid of snakes, and look upon them with a mixture of hor-

ror and detestation that fearfully excites them; and a naturalist who had been in the habit of strolling into the parrot-house at the Zoological Gardens in London was very much surprised, one day, to find that his entrance seemed to be the signal for a wild and general disturbance. Parrots, macaws and cockatoos shrieked their indignation at the intrusion; and such a clamor as they raised, he says—such a whirlwind of discordant sounds—would certainly have done credit to Babel. He left the place in disgust, and walked around the garden until they became quiet again. But no sooner did he appear for the second time than the same scene again occurred. Wondering very much at this reception, when he had hitherto been a welcome visitor, he approached an old favorite cockatoo, and, holding up before her face a little walking-cane that he carried, he began to expostulate with her on such behavior. Instantly the bird became a perfect picture of rage and terror; with crest erected to the highest point, staring eyes and trembling all over, she

retreated to the very end of her chain, and struck with her wings at the cane as if fighting for her very life.

"And so indeed the poor bird thought she was doing; for when the visitor glanced at his cane, he saw at once the cause of her fury, the head of the walking-stick being carved to imitate that of a serpent with brilliant eyes and a most threatening aspect. The supposed appearance of so terrible a foe among the peaceful party had roused their natural instinct of self-defence and caused them to pay a noisy tribute to the skill of the carver.

"And now," added Miss Harson, "I have ended our study of birds and their ways with parrots and cockatoos, because these strange foreign creatures are so often seen in captivity far from their native lands that they scarcely seem to belong anywhere in particular. They have been great favorites as cage-birds and household pets from very early times; and in the reign of Nero a great many parrots were taken to Rome from different parts of Africa. These were placed

in very elegant and costly cages made of silver, ivory and tortoise-shell, and so highly were they valued that the price of a parrot was often equal to that of a slave."

CHAPTER XXXIV.

TWO GREAT NATURALISTS.

“WE have really learned a great deal about birds,” said Miss Harson, “and before we leave the subject I think it will be pleasant to hear something about two men who have given us much information which they gathered with great labor and patience. One of these men was an Englishman, and the other an American. The name of the Englishman is Thomas Bewick, and Malcolm must tell us the name of the American.”

“Audubon!” shouted Malcolm, promptly. “And he drew all these pictures that you have shown us, Miss Harson.”

“How did he do it?” asked Edie, very seriously. “Did he put the poor little birds down on the paper and then take a lead-pencil and mark around them?”

Clara and Malcolm laughed at this idea ; but the governess answered kindly :

“No, dear child ; that is not the way that drawings are made, and especially of birds and animals. But you will know about it by and by. The great English naturalist—or bird-lover, as he was principally known—Thomas Bewick, was born in the year 1753, on a farm near Newcastle, and in looking at this portrait of a respectable elderly gentleman it is not easy to believe that he was a remarkably mischievous boy.”

Malcolm quite agreed with the young lady as, with the other children, he bent over the volume in Miss Harson's hand ; but he now found the naturalist a much more interesting character than he had expected.

“It was the fashion to flog boys a great deal in those days, and Thomas got a double share at school and at home, until his teacher, for whom he had a great affection, persuaded him to turn over a new leaf. He said of his father that ‘he had always set him the example and taken every oppor-

tunity of showing how much he detested meanness, and of drawing forth every particle of pride within me for the purpose of directing it in the right way;’ and finally he became a noble and good man.

“Bewick left school when he was but fourteen, and his great ambition was to draw pictures. He had practiced on his slate, on scraps of paper, and on almost anything that he could get. He would even draw with chalk on gravestones, the porch floor at the church, and at night on the flags and hearthstone before the fire, which scorched his earnest face. To his great delight, some one gave him a quantity of paper, and on this he drew with pen and ink and bramble-berry juice. ‘Afterward, equipped with camel’s-hair pencils and shells of colors, he executed, without patterns of any kind, paintings of birds, beasts, landscapes, and hunting-scenes in particular, which he soon had the satisfaction of seeing hung on the walls of his admiring neighbors’ houses.’

“It is said that he began to study the habits of birds at a very early age, and

that he would climb to any height to secure a nest. He also went fishing and hunting, and seemed to enjoy the study of all living things. He went into business as an engraver after serving his time as apprentice, and, besides working in metals, he made a great many wood-cuts for books. His volume of *Quadrupeds*, for which his partner did the writing, was very much admired. Then came the *History of British Birds*, of which Bewick did nearly all the writing, as well as make the pictures; and he did it, too, in what time he could spare from the shop.

“Thomas Bewick was a great worker as long as he lived, and he made many improvements in the art of engraving. He had noticed, when a boy, the coarseness of the wood-cuts that were seen on the walls of people’s houses, and he speedily resolved to do something better. This gift was of great use to him in preparing his books, and the *British Birds* is illustrated with over five hundred engravings. He must often have been tired, as well as discouraged, with so much on his hands,

but he persevered; and, besides doing a great deal of work, he lived to a good old age.

“When he died, in 1828, he was famed far and near as a self-trained naturalist and wood-engraver. We owe the beginning of our many illustrated books and periodicals to Thomas Bewick, who, when a boy, closely observed the tavern-signs in the country around him; and one of these—‘The Hounds and Hare’—he was quite sure he could improve if he tried. Very likely he had drawn the picture on his slate over and over again.

“The *History of British Birds* is his best-known work, and at the time of his death he had begun a new one, to be called *History of British Fishes*. His last wood-cut was a vignette for this book, representing the farmhouse of Cherryburn, where he was born, and his own funeral procession winding down the hillside.”

“He must have been a very funny man,” said Clara.

“He was odd in many ways,” replied Miss Harson, “and his book of *Wood-Cuts*

has many amusing as well as some very queer things in it. At that time—for it is more than half a century since he died—people had different ideas of funny and amusing things from those that prevail now, and they often said and wrote what we would not think proper. Bewick made the study of natural history popular, both by his cheap wood-cuts and by his own knowledge of the subject, mostly gained while he was a boy, and through his labors many who came after him have been able to study and do even better than he did.—And now what do you think of the English naturalist, Malcolm?”

“Well, Miss Harson,” replied that young gentleman, frankly, “I think he had the best time when he was a boy—except the floggings.”

“He wasn’t a good boy,” said little Edie, “to steal birds’ nests.”

“No, dear,” replied their governess, “not if he had stolen them for his own amusement or for cruelty. But I do not think he did; for those who undertake to become thoroughly acquainted with birds have to

study them from the very beginning.— And, as to Bewick's 'best time,' Malcolm," she continued, with a smile, "you are thinking of the tree-climbing and fishing and hunting and drawing pictures—a real boy's idea of enjoyment; but don't you think that when this wild Thomas became a man, he had his best time when he was doing so much to improve his fellow-men?"

Yes, after some reflection, Malcolm supposed he had; but Miss Harson laughed, for it was evident that Bewick as a boy appeared to her pupil a much more lovely character than Bewick as a man.

"I like him," said Clara, very decidedly, as they gazed at a portrait of Audubon; "he looks like—like an old lion."

"That is not a bad comparison, little girl," replied her governess. "Our own American naturalist is a noble-looking man, and does suggest the king of animals. His name, you see, is French, and his ancestors came from France; but he was born in Louisiana in 1782, when Thomas Bewick was twenty-nine years old.

“John James Audubon was attracted from his earliest childhood by the songs and appearance of birds, and his greatest delight was to wander through the woods and listen to their different notes. He was encouraged in this by his father, who took pains to interest him in the beautiful things of nature; and the habits and varieties of birds, animals and flowers were carefully explained on the excursions which father and son often made together.

“Like young Bewick, Audubon tried to teach himself drawing while a boy, that he might preserve the beautiful appearance of the birds and flowers which he found in the woods; but when he was fifteen, his father sent him to Paris to finish his education, and here, for two years, he took lessons of the celebrated painter David. This was a great advantage to our young naturalist; and when, at eighteen, he returned to America, his father gave him a farm near Philadelphia.

“Audubon’s house was a lovely spot at the junction of the Perkiomen Creek and the Schuylkill, and he spent nearly his

whole time out of doors, roaming about in quest of birds, flowers and small animals to draw and paint from nature. He would start out at daylight, and return wet with dew in the evening, often carrying some rare bird, whose likeness was soon transferred to paper.

"And now, Edie darling," said Miss Harson, "I will explain to you how these pictures were made. Audubon's were all life-size—that is, as large as the bird itself, instead of being made much smaller, like most pictures. The dead bird was placed before the artist as he sat there with his drawing-paper and pencils and brushes and paints; and he was so careful to get every part of it the exact size that he measured the beak and body and talons, and all the rest of it, before he made the lines on paper. No trouble was too much for him to take, and it is because of his great patience and industry that these beautiful plates give us so much pleasure now.

"While yet a very young man Audubon married and went to live in Louisville,

Kentucky. He was a great sportsman, and during the two years of his stay there he killed and sketched all the birds he could find. Other hunters in the neighborhood, hearing of his fame, would shoot birds and animals for him to add to his collection, until he had at least two hundred specimens. He had entered into business with a partner, but out of the woods he spent his time in sketching, while the partner kept the books; and both seemed satisfied with this arrangement."

"I'd rather have been Audubon," said Malcolm, admiringly. "What good times he must have had!"

"Yes, for he enjoyed his work. But remember, Malcolm, that it was *work*, and that even his roaming the woods, which you think so pleasant, was done with an object; for our naturalist was not a self-pleasing idler.

"Audubon moved almost as often as the Arabs, and from Louisville he went farther up the Ohio River, near the great forests of that region. The village of Hen-

derson, in which he made his home, then contained only six or eight houses, and one of them was a very small log hut which happened to be empty, and here the little family of father and mother and infant son settled down for a while. All around them was dense forest, but they found kind neighbors even in this lonely spot; and Audubon and his wife were as happy as possible, roaming the woods together and carrying their child with them. The only business to be thought of now was hunting and fishing.

“But the restless bird-hunter soon wanted fresh forests to explore; and, although his family and friends begged him to remain where he was, he resolved to leave his home for a time that he might lead a more completely wandering life. ‘He set out with a valise on his back containing his diary, his colors, his brushes and pencils and a small supply of linen, which he made use of, when required, to furbish his fowling-piece, and plunged into the prairies.’

“Thousands of people have enjoyed the

results of this wild tramp; for not only has Audubon painted and described the numerous species of birds which inhabit the vast continent that extends from Mexico to Labrador, but in five thick volumes he has given lively picturesque sketches of the strange characters and incidents which he encountered on the way, and graphic descriptions of the wonderful scenery. He slept by night at the foot of a tree, killed game and cooked it for food, and floated down hundreds of miles along mighty rivers in a frail canoe, sketching as he went, everywhere braving fatigue and disappointment with dauntless courage. And all this without any idea of gain, but just because he loved it."

Malcolm seemed to think that any boy or man might love such a delightful way of living as that, and he would have been only too glad to try it himself; but Clara and Edith asked timidly if Audubon wasn't afraid of bears and things.

"No," replied their governess: "he did not know what fear was; and the 'bears and things' were probably afraid of him.

"In 1824, when the naturalist was no longer a young man, another famous bird-lover, Charles Lucien Bonaparte, introduced him to the Natural History Society of Philadelphia, and then he began to feel a desire to do something that would be worth showing. The drawings he had already made were very much admired, but Audubon believed that he could do better things; and he was soon off again to visit the great lakes of the North.

"In the vast forests on their borders he thought much of the undertaking of getting his large drawings published. He was little known, and had no wealthy friends to help him; besides birds, he had also painted flowers, plants, insects, reptiles and fishes, which were as faithfully copied. Finally, he returned to his family, who had moved to Louisiana, and explored all the large forests in that region for fresh specimens. Next he visited the large cities of the United States, trying to get subscribers for his books of birds; but he did not meet with much success.

"Audubon now went to England, and

there his drawings were exhibited to the public and very highly praised. In Scotland and in France he was also received with enthusiasm, and the kings of England and France placed their names at the head of his subscription-list.

"In 1830 was published the first volume of *Birds of America*, containing ninety-nine birds, the size and exact representation of the living models. Audubon then made a tour through the forests of Maine and New Brunswick and the shores of the Bay of Fundy, visited the coast of Labrador, and finished with Newfoundland and Nova Scotia. In the spring he sailed again for England, and in 1834 the second volume of *Birds* appeared.

"Many years elapsed before the four volumes of engravings and the additional five of description were all published; and in the four hundred and thirty-five plates there are over a thousand figures, 'from the bird of Washington to the humming-bird, of the size of life, and a great variety of land and marine views, and flowers and other productions of different

climates and seasons, all carefully drawn and colored after nature.'

"Audubon had spent nearly half a century in collecting materials for this immense work, and it was a solemn thought that of those who read the first volume many of them might not live to enjoy the last. Soon after the second volumes of *Birds of America* and *Ornithological Biography* were published, a nobleman and his family called upon Audubon in London, and after being told that it would take eight more years to finish the work he subscribed for it, saying, 'I may not see it finished, but my children will.'

"These words made a deep impression on the naturalist. 'The solemnity of his manner,' he writes in the introduction to his third volume, 'I could not forget for several days. I often thought that neither might I see the work completed, but at length exclaimed, "My sons may." And now that another volume, both of my illustrations and my biographies, is finished, my trust in Providence is augmented, and I cannot but hope that my-

self and my family together may be permitted to see the completion of my labors.'

"Audubon's desire was granted, and his life was spared for some years after his work was finished. He died in New York in 1851, leaving behind him what Cuvier pronounced 'the most gigantic and most magnificent monument that had ever been erected to Nature.'

"We cannot make a better close of our study of birds than with the words of a thoughtful naturalist :

"'It is, however, to little purpose that we listen with pleasure to the thousand voices of the birds who fly above the earth in the open firmament of heaven, unless their swelling harmony, while it delights our ear, leads our thoughts to their Creator and ours—to Him who in the great book of nature has been pleased to supply us with a commentary on that book of inspiration from whose pages, if studied aright, we may learn to acquaint ourselves with him and be at peace.'"

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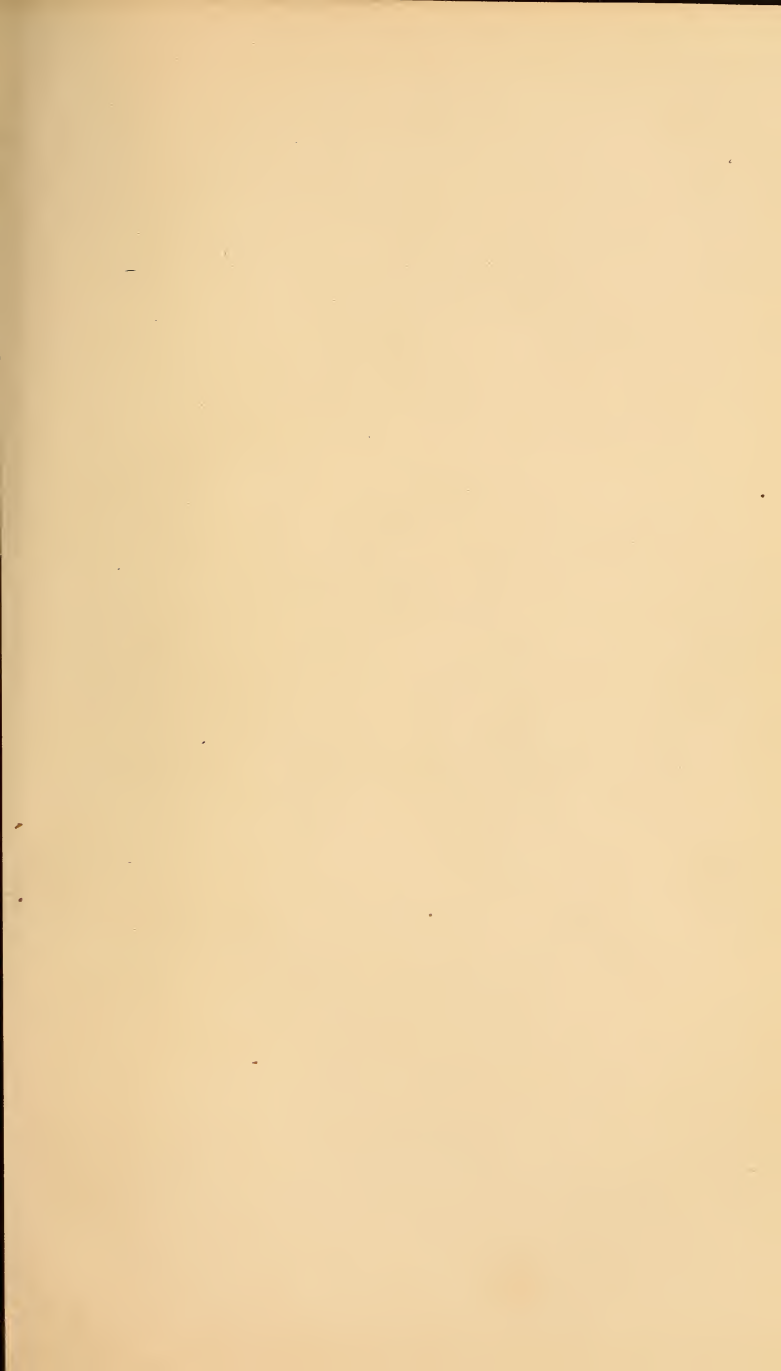
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